

THE AGES DIGITAL LIBRARY  
**SERMONS**

**THE METROPOLITAN  
TABERNACLE PULPIT VOL. 11**

**(Sermons Nos. 607-667)**

*Published in 1865*

*by Charles Spurgeon*

**Books For The Ages**  
AGES Software • Albany, OR USA  
Version 1.0 © 1997

# TRUE UNITY PROMOTED.

NO. 607

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 1ST, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Endeavoring to keep The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” —  
Ephesians 4:3.*

YOU will remember that for several years I have received my morning's text for the first Sabbath in the year from an esteemed brother, a clergyman of the Church of England. This year he very kindly sends me this verse, which I hope will be useful to us all, reminding us of our former faults, and of our present duty in the matter of “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

The Pope has lately been most lustily cursing us all. According to his nature, of course, must be his utterances. We could not expect a blessing where no blessing abides; and, if we get a curse, we only receive a polluted stream from a polluted fountain. It is an old saying that England never prospers so well, as when the Pope curses her. I hope to see a year of great prosperity this year. Let the poor deluded priest curse as long as he will, our God shall turn it into a blessing. In former days, when some of the Churches of Christ began to shake off the yoke of Popedom from their necks, the plea urged against reformation was the necessity of maintaining unity. “Ye must bear with this ceremony and that dogma; no matter how antichristian and unholy, you must bear with it, ‘endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’” So spake the old serpent in those early days. “The Church is one; woe unto those who shall create schism! It may be true that Mary is set up in the place of Christ, that images are worshipped, cast clouts and rotten rags adored, and pardons bought and sold for crimes of every kind; it may be that the so-called Church has become an abomination and a nuisance upon the face of the earth; but still,

‘endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,’ you must lie down, restrain the testimony of the Spirit of God within you, keep his truth under a bushel, and let the lie prevail.” This was the grand sophistry of the Church of Rome. When, however, she could not seduce men by talking of love and union, she took upon herself to use her natural tone of voice, and cursed right and left right heartily: and let her curse till she expires! Brethren, there was no force in the argument of the Papist, if you will look at the text for a moment: the text bids us endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit, but it does not tell us to endeavor to maintain the unity of evil, the unity of superstition, or the unity of spiritual tyranny. The unity of error, of false doctrine, of priestcraft, may have in it the spirit of Satan; we do not doubt that; but that it is the unity of the Spirit of God we do utterly deny. The unity of evil we are to break down by every weapon which our hand can grasp: the unity of the Spirit which we are to maintain and foster is quite another thing. Remember that we are forbidden to do evil that good may come. But it is to do evil; to restrain the witness of the Spirit of God within us; to conceal any truth which we have learned by revelation of God; to hold back from testifying for God’s truth and Word, against the sin and folly of man’s inventions, would be sin of the blackest hue. We dare not commit the sin of quenching the Holy Spirit, even though it were with the view of promoting unity. But the unity of the Spirit never requires any sinful support; that is maintained not by suppressing truth, but by publishing it abroad. The unity of the Spirit has for its pillars, among other things, the witnessing of spiritually enlightened saints to the one faith which God has revealed in his Word. That is quite another unity which would gag our mouths and turn us all into dumb driven cattle, to be fed or slaughtered at the will of priestly masters. Dr. McNeil has, very properly, said that a man can scarcely be an earnest Christian in the resent day without being a controversialist. We are sent forth to-day as sheep in the midst of wolves: can there be agreement? We are kindled as lamps in the midst of darkness: can there be concord? Hath not Christ himself said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword?” You understand how all this is the truest method of endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit; for Christ the man of war, is Jesus the Peacemaker; but in order to the creation of lasting, spiritual peace, the phalanx of evil must be broken, and the unity of darkness dashed to shivers. I pray God evermore to preserve us from a unity in which truth shall be considered valueless, in which principle gives place to policy, in which the noble and masculine virtues which adorn the Christian hero are

to be supplemented by an effeminate affectation of charity. May the Lord deliver us from indifference to his word and will; for this creates the cold unity of masses of ice frozen into an iceberg, chilling the air for miles around: the unity of the dead as they sleep in their graves, contending for nothing, because they have neither part nor lot in all that belongs to living men. There is a unity which is seldom broken, the unity of devils, who, under the service of their great liege master, never disagree and quarrel: from this terrible unity keep us, O God of heaven! The unity of locusts who have one common object, the glutting of themselves to the ruin of all around, the unity of the waves of Tophet's fire, sweeping myriads into deeper misery: from this also, O King of heaven, save us evermore! May God perpetually send some prophet who shall cry aloud to the world "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." May there ever be found some men, though they be rough as Amos, or stern as Haggai, who shall denounce again and again all league with error and all compromise with sin, and declare that these are the abhorrence of God. Never dream that holy contention is at all a violation of my text. The destruction of every sort of union which is not based on truth, is a preliminary to the edification of the unity of the Spirit. We must first sweep away these walls of untempered mortar — these tottering fences of man's building — before there can be room to lay the goodly stones of Jerusalem's walls one upon the other for lasting and enduring prosperity. In this spirit have I spoken to clear a way to reach my text.

It is clear from the text, that there is a unity of the Spirit to be kept, secondly, that it needs keeping; and, thirdly, that a bond is to be used. When we have enlarged upon these points, we shall use the text in its practical application, first to Christians in their connection with other Churches, and then to members of the same Church in their connection with each other.

## **I. First, THERE IS A UNITY OF THE SPIRIT OF WHICH THE TEXT SPEAKS, WHICH IS WORTHY TO BE KEPT.**

You will observe it is not an ecclesiastical unity, it is not endeavoring to keep the unity of the denomination, the community, the diocese, the parish — no, it is "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit." Men speak of the Episcopal Church, the Wesleyan Church, or the Presbyterian Church. Now I hesitate not to say that there is nothing whatever in Scripture at all

parallel to such language; for there I read of the seven Churches in Asia, the Church in Corinth, Philippi, Antioch, etc. In England, if I speak according to the Word of God, there are some thousands of Churches holding the episcopal form of government; in Scotland, some thousands of godly Churches ordered according to Presbyterian rule; among the Wesleyans, Churches adhering to the form of government first carried out by Mr. Wesley; but it is not according to the method of Scripture but only according to human invention to speak of a whole cluster of Churches as one Church. Although myself much inclined to a Presbyterian union among our Churches, I cannot but perceive in Holy Scripture that each Church is separate and distinct from every other Church; the whole being connected by those divers bonds and ligaments which keep all the separate members together, but not so connected as to run into one another to lose their separateness and individuality. There is nothing in Scripture which says, “Endeavouring to keep up your ecclesiastical arrangements for centralization;” but the exhortation runs thus: “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit.”

Again, you will observe it does not say, “Endeavouring to keep the uniformity of the Spirit.” The Spirit does not recognize uniformity. The analogy of his work in nature is against it. The flowers are not all tinted with the same hue, nor do they exhale the same odours. There is variety everywhere in the work of God. If I glance at providence, I do not perceive that any two events happen after the same form — the page of history is varied. If, therefore, I look into the Church of God, I do not expect to find that all Christians pronounce the same shibboleth, or see with the same eyes. The same, “one Lord one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, we rejoice to recognize; but as to uniformity of dress, liturgical verbiage, or form of worship, I find nothing of it in Scripture. Men may pray acceptably standing, sitting, kneeling, or lying with their faces upon the earth; they may meet with Jesus by the river’s side, in the temple porch, in a prison, or in a private house; and they may be one in the same Spirit although the one regardeth a day, and the other regardeth it not.

But what is this unity of the Spirit? I trust, dear brethren, that we know it by having it in possession; for it is most certain that we cannot keep the unity of the Spirit, if we have it not already. Let us ask ourselves the question, “Have we the unity of the Spirit?” None can have it but those who have the Spirit, and the Spirit dwells only in new-born believing souls. By virtue of his having the Spirit, the believer is in union with every other

spiritual man, and this is the unity which he is to endeavor to keep. This unity of the Spirit is manifested in love. A husband and wife may be, through providence, cast hundreds of miles from one another, but there is a unity of spirit in them because their hearts are one. We, brethren, are divided many thousands of miles from the saints in Australia, America, and the South Sea, but loving as brethren, we feel the unity of the Spirit. I was never a member of a Church meeting in the backwoods of America; I never worshipped God with the Samoans, or with my brethren in New Zealand; but notwithstanding all this, I feel the unity of the Spirit in my soul with them, and everything which concerns their spiritual welfare is interesting to me.

This unity of the Spirit is caused by a similarity of nature. Find a drop of water glittering in the rainbow, leaping in the cataract, rippling in the rivulet, lying silent in the stagnant pool, or dashing in spray against the vessel's side, that water claims kinship with every drop of water the wide world over, because it is the same in its elements; and even so there is a unity of the Spirit which we cannot imitate, which consists in our being "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," bearing in us the Holy Ghost as our daily quickener, and walking in the path of faith in the living God. Here is the unity of spirit, a unity of life, nature working itself out in love. This is sustained daily by the Spirit of God. He who makes us one, keeps us one. Every member of my body must have a communion with every other member of my body. I say must. The question never arises, that I know of, between the members of my body whether they will do so or not. As long as there is life in my frame, every separate portion of my body must have communion with every other portion of it. Here is my finger — I may discolour it with some noxious drug; my head may not approve of the staining of my finger; my head may suggest a thousand ways by which that finger ought to be put through a purgation, and this may be all right and proper; but my head never says, "I will cut off that finger from communion." My tongue speaks loudly against the noxious fluid which has done my finger mischief and has blistered it so as to cause pain to the whole body, yet the head cannot say, "I will have that finger cut off," unless the body is willing to be for ever mutilated and incomplete. Now, it is not possible to mutilate the body of Christ. Christ does not lose his members or cast off parts of his mystical body. And therefore it never ought to enter the head of any Christian man whether or not he shall have communion in spirit with any other Christian,

for he cannot do without it: as long as he lives he must have it. This does not check him in boldly denouncing the error into which his brother may have fallen, or in avoiding his intimate acquaintance while he continues to sin; but it does forbid the thought that we can ever really sever any true believer from Christ, or even from us, if we be in Christ Jesus.

The unity of the Spirit is preserved, then, by the Holy Ghost infusing daily life-floods into the one mystical body; and in proportion as the life-floods become more strong, that union becomes more manifest. Let a spirit of prayer be poured out on all our Churches, conventionalities will be dashed down, divisions will be forgotten, and locked in each others arms, the people of God will show to the world that they are one in Christ Jesus.

There are some points in which this unity of the Spirit is certain to discover itself. In prayer, how truly does Montgomery put it: —

*“The saints in prayer appear as one  
In word, and deed, and mind,  
While with the Father and the Son,  
Sweet fellowship they find.”*

There is a unity of praise too. Our hymn books differ after all very little; we still sing the same song, the praise of the same Savior. This unity will soon discover itself in co-working: they have a union in their conflict with the common foe, and in their contention for the common truth. This will lead to communion — I do not mean sitting down to the same table to eat bread and drink wine — that is only the outward union — but I mean that communion which consists in heart beating true to heart, and in the feeling, that they are one in Christ Jesus. It was a motto with Bucer, “To love all in whom we could see anything of Christ Jesus.” Be this your motto, brother in Christ. Make not your love an excuse for not offering stern rebuke, but rebuke because you love. Some persons think that unless you smooth your tongue and cover your words with sugar, no matter though it may be sugar of lead — unless you cringe, and compliment, and conceal, there is no love in your heart; but I trust it will be our privilege to show in our own persons, some of us, how sternly we can dissent and yet love; how truly be Nonconformists to our brethren’s error, and yet in our very nonconformity prove our affection to them, and to our common Master. It is said of some men that they appear to have been born upon the mountains of Bether, for they do nothing but cause division; and baptized in the waters of Meribah, for they delight in causing strife. This is not the case with the genuine

Christian; he cares only for the truth, for his Master, for the love of souls; and when these things are not imperilled, his own private likes or dislikes never affect him. He loves as much to see another Church prosper as his own: so long as he can know that Christ is glorified it is a matter of comparative indifference to him by what minister God's arm is made bare, in what place souls are converted, or to what particular form of worship men addict themselves: yet ever does he hold to this, that there is no unity of the Spirit where there is a lie in the case; that where the souls of men are concerned he would be a traitor to God if he did not bear witness against the error which damns, and testify to the truth which saves; and where the crown jewels of his Masters kingdom are concerned he dares not traitorously hold his tongue; but though his fellow-subjects cast his name out as evil, he counts it all joy so long as he is faithful to his Master and discharges his conscience as before the Judge of quick and dead.

## II. Secondly, THIS UNITY NEEDS KEEPING.

It is a very difficult thing to maintain, and that for several reasons. Our sins would, very naturally, break it. If we were all angels, we should keep the unity of the Spirit, and not need even the exhortation to do so; but, alas! we are proud, and pride is the mother of division. Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence, is very sure to head a faction. Envy, too, how that separated very friends! When I cannot be satisfied with anything which is not hammered on my anvil or run in my mould; when another man's candle grieves me because it gives more light than mine; and when another man troubles me because he has more grace than I have — oh! there is no unity in this case. Anger — what a deadly foe is that to unity! when we cannot brook the smallest disrespect; when the slightest thing brings the blood into our face; when we speak unadvisedly with our lips: but surely I need not read the long list of sins which spoil this unity of the Spirit, for they are legion. O, may God cast them out from us, for only so can we keep the unity of the Spirit. But, beloved, our very virtues may make it difficult for us to keep this unity. Luther is brave and bold, hot and impetuous; he is just the man to lead the van and clear the way for the Reformation. Calvin is logical, clear, cool, precise; he seldom speaks rashly. It is not in the order of things that Luther and Calvin, should always agree. Their very virtues cause them to fall out, and, consequently, Luther, in a bad temper, calls Calvin a pig, and a



devil; and, albeit, Calvin once replied, “Luther may call me what he will, but I will always call him a dear servant of Christ,” yet John Calvin knew how to pierce Luther under the fifth rib when he was in the humor. In those days the courtesies of Christians to one another were generally of the iron-gauntlet order, rather than the naked hand; for all were so much called to war for the sake of the truth; that even their fellow soldiers were treated with suspicion; and it may be with us that the very watchfulness of truth, which is so valuable, may make us suspect where there is no need for suspicion, and our courage may take us as sometimes a fiery horse has carried a young warrior beyond where he intended to have ridden, where he may be taken prisoner to his own damage. We must watch, the best of us must watch lest we fight the Lord’s battles with Satan’s weapons, and so even from love to God and his truth, violate the unity of the Spirit.

The unity of the Spirit ought to be kept, dear friends, because Satan is so busy to mar it. He knows that the greatest glory of Christ will spring from the unity of his Church. “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” There is no Church happiness where there is not Church unity. Let a Church be disaffected and divided, the schism in the body is death to all hallowed fellowship. We cannot enjoy communion with each other unless our hearts be one. Our work for God, how feebly is it done when we are not agreed! The enemy cannot desire a better ally than strife in the midst of our camp. “Can ye not agree,” said a warrior of old “when your enemy is in sight!” Christians, can you not agree to keep the unity of the Spirit when a destroying Satan is ever on the watch seeking to drag immortal souls down to perdition? We must be more diligent in this matter; we must seek to purge out from ourselves everything which would divide, and to have in our hearts every holy thought which would tend to unite us with our brethren. I am not, when I join a Christian Church, to say, “I am quite certain I shall never break its unity.” I am to suspect myself of a liability to that evil, and I am to watch with all diligence that I keep the unity of the Spirit.

**III.** In the third place, in order to the keeping of this, THERE IS A BOND PROVIDED, THE BOND OF PEACE.

Beloved, there should be much peace, perfect peace, unbounded peace between the people of God. We are not aliens; we are “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” Realize your fellow-citizenship;

treat not Christian people as foreigners, and this bond of fellow-citizenship will be one bond of peace. You are not enemies. Men may be fellow-citizens and yet hate one another, but you are friends, you are all friends to Christ, and in him you are all friends to one another; let that be another bond. But you go farther; you are not mere friends, you are brethren, born of the same parent, filled with the same life; and shall not this be a bond? See that ye fall not out by the way; strive not one with another, for ye are brethren. This is not all; you are nearer than this; you are members of the same body. Shall this mysterious union fail to be a bond of peace to you? Wilt thou, being the foot, contend with the eye? or wilt thou, being the eye, contend with the hand, and say, "I have no need of thee"? If it be indeed the truth, and not a fiction, that we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones — since the joints and bones in other men's bodies do not disagree, let it never be said of the mystical body of our blessed Lord, that there was such a monstrous thing in it, that the various parts would not co-work, but, fell to battling one with another.

I believe I have brought out the meaning of the text. There is a unity of the Spirit which is worthy to be kept — we ought to keep it — we must try to keep it in the bond of peace.

To come to the practical conclusion of the subject. First, in the connection of one Church with another; and, secondly, in the connection of one Church member with another.

It is not a desirable thing that all Churches should melt into one another and become one; for the complete fusion of all Churches into one ecclesiastical corporation would inevitably produce another form of Popery, since history teaches us that large ecclesiastical bodies grow more or less corrupt as a matter of course. Huge spiritual corporations are, as a whole, the strongholds of tyranny and the refuges of abuse; and it is only a matter of time when they shall break to pieces. Disruption and secession must occur, and will occur, where a unity is attempted which is not meant in God's Word; but it will be a blessed thing when all the Churches walk together in the unity of the Spirit when this Church, although it has been baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ, and laments the neglect of that ordinance by others, yet feels that the unity of the Spirit is not to be broken, and holds out its right hand to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; when yonder Church, governed by its elders, feels a unity with another Church which is presided over by its bishop; when a certain

Church, which holds with mutual edification and no ministry, is yet not quarrelsome towards those who love the ministry of the Word; when, in fact, we have agreed in this one thing, that we will search the Word independently and act out according to our light what we find to be true; but having so done we will keep the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace. I say this is most desirable and this it is that we are to seek after; not the fusion of all into one denomination, but the keeping of each Church in its own distinct independent testimony in love with every other Church that is doing the same.

Now, in order to this, I have a few suggestions to offer. It is quite certain we shall never keep the unity of the Spirit if this Church shall declare that it is superior to every other. If there be a Church which says, "We are the Church, and all others are mere sects; we are established, and others are only tolerated;" then it is a troubler in Israel, and must hide its head when the unity of the Spirit is so much as hinted at. Any Church which lifts up its head on high and boasts over other Churches has violated the unity of the Spirit. If other Churches reply, "One is our Master and all we are brethren," they do not violate the unity of the Spirit, for they simply claim their rights and speak the truth. That other Church which forgets its true position as one in the family, and begins to set itself up as mistress, and claim pre-eminence over its fellow-servants, has put it out of its own power to keep the unity of the Spirit, for it has violated it once for all.

A Church that would keep the unity of the Spirit, again, must not consider itself to be so infallible, that not to belong to its membership is sin. What right has any one Church to set itself up as the standard, so that those who join it not are necessarily Dissenters? It is true my Episcopal brother is a Dissenter, he dissents from me; it is true he is a Nonconformist, for he does not conform to me: I would not, however, call him by such names, lest I should arrogate to my own Church to be the one Church, and so should break the unity of the Spirit. If I turn to history, I may believe that my Church can claim a long line of ancestors descending from the apostles, without ever running through the Church of Rome, but shall I therefore call a brother who does not quite see this succession, a schismatic, and denominate his assembly a conventicle? If he is a schismatic because he does not come to my place, why am I not a schismatic because I do not go to his? Well, but, he divides the Church! He ought to come and worship with me. Ought I not to go and worship with him? Ah! but we are the larger number! Are divine things to be ruled by the majority? Where would

the Church of God be any day if it came to polling? I am afraid the devil would always be at the head of the poll. We wish to keep the unity of the Spirit, and if we have a little sister, we will treat her all the more kindly, owing to the fewness of her members. If I want to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” I must never call in the magistrate to force my brother to pay for washing my surplice, ringing my bell, and winding up my clock. I must not tell my brother that he is bound to pay for the support of my worship. “Oh!” he says, “my dear friend, I pay for the maintenance of the worship which I believe to be correct, and I am quite willing that you should do the same for yours; I would voluntarily assist you if you were poor; but you tell me you will put me in prison if I do not pay, and yet tell me to keep the unity of the Spirit; but, my dear friend, it is not keeping the unity of the Spirit to take away my stool, and my table and my candlestick, and say you will put me in ‘limbo,’ or hail me before an ecclesiastical court. You send the constable after me; and then if I say a word about it, you say, ‘Charity hopeth all things.’” Yes, among the rest, it hopes that you will give up your sin in this matter.

If we should stand possessed of a piece of ground where we bury our dead, and if there should happen to come a member of another Christian Church who would wish to lay his poor dead baby in our ground, there being no other convenient spot anywhere, and he asks the favor, I think we can hardly be thought to keep the unity of the Spirit if we tell him, “No, nothing of the kind; you had your child sprinkled, therefore it cannot be buried with us Christians; we will not have your sprinkled baby lying alongside of our baptized dead.” I do not think that is keeping the unity of the Spirit. And I do not think when some Churches have turned from their grave-yard gate the mourners who have brought an unbaptized infant, and when the mourners have gone back weeping to their homes — I do not think such Churches have been endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Again, if Churches are to agree one with another, they must not make rules that ministers who are not of their own denomination shall not occupy their pulpits. I should be ashamed of you, if you passed a resolution that no one dissenting from us should stand in my pulpit. But we know a Church which says, “No matter how good a man may be; he may be a man as venerated as John Angell James; or he may have all the excellencies of a William Jay — we would not, perhaps, mind hearing him in a Town Hall, but into the sacredness of our particular rostrum these interlopers must not intrude; for, says this Church, “Ours are

ministers, yours are only lay-teachers; ours are sacraments: the cup of blessing which we bless is the blood of Christ, and the bread which we break is the body of Christ; you have no sacramental efficacy with you; you are not a Church in fact, but only a body of schismatics, meeting together to carry out what you think to be right. We tolerate you; that is all we can do." Where is the unity of the Spirit there? My dear friends, I received this text from one of the most holy men in the Church of England: if I expound it slightly for her benefit, he will, I trust, excuse me, for I do so in all honesty, desiring to aid him and many others in revision and reform. If this Church were in the same condition as the Church of England, I would pray to be as plain in my remarks. I say it is an anachronism; it is a thing out of date for the nineteenth century, for any one Church in this land, and that Church the only one which defiles her hand by taking State-pay, to stand up and say, "We are the Church; our ministers are the ministers; our people are the people; and now, dear brethren, shake hands, and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit of God." Why, it is preposterous. Let us meet on equal ground; let us lay aside all pretences to superiority; let us really aid and not oppress each other; let us mingle in prayer; let us unite in confession of sin; let us join heartily in reforming our errors, and a true Evangelical Alliance will cover our land. If any Church will take the Bible as its standard, and in the power of the Spirit of God preach the name of Jesus, there are thousands of us who will rejoice to give the right hand of fellowship with a hearty greeting to all such, and we are every day striving to get other Churches and ourselves more and more into that condition in which, while holding our own, we can yet keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Now, a few words to you in regard to your relationship to one another as members of the same Church. If we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace in the same Church, then we must avoid everything that would mar it. Gossip — gossip is a very ready means of separating friends from one another. Let us endeavor to talk of something better than each other's characters. Dionysius went down to the Academy to Plato. Plato asked what he came for. "Why," said Dionysius, "I thought that you, Plato, would be talking against me to your students." Plato made this answer: "Dost thou think, Dionysius, we are so destitute of matter to converse upon that we talk of thee?" Truly we must be very short of subjects when we begin to talk of one another. It is better far that we magnify Christ than detract from the honor of his members. We must lay

aside all envy. Multitudes of good people liked the Reformation, but they said they did not like the idea of its being done by a poor miserable monk, like Martin Luther; and so there are many who like to see good things done, and good works carried on, but do not care to see it done by that upstart young brother, or that poor man, or that woman who has no particular rank or state. As a Church let us shake off envyings; let us all rejoice in God's light; and as for pride — if any of you have grown vainglorious of late, shake it off. I hope to exercise a ministry in this place which will drive out those of you who will not acknowledge your brethren when they are poorer or of less education than yourselves. What if the man does mar the Queen's English when he talks — what does that matter, so long as his heart is right? As long as you can feel he loves the Master, surely you can put up with his faults of language, if he can put up with your faults of action. Then let us cultivate everything that would tend to unity. Are any sick? Let us care for them. Are any suffering? Let us weep with them. Do we know one who has less love than others? then let us have more, so as to make up the deficiency. Do we perceive faults in a brother? let us admonish him in love and affection. I pray you be peacemakers, everyone. Let the Church go on as it has done for the last eleven years, in holy concord and blessed unity. Let us remember that we cannot keep the unity of the Spirit unless we all believe the truth of God. Let us search our Bibles, therefore, and conform our views and sentiments to the teaching of God's Word. I have already told you that unity in error is unity in ruin. We want unity in the truth of God through the Spirit of God. This let us seek after; let us live near to Christ, for this is the best way of promoting unity. Divisions in Churches never begin with those full of love to the Savior. Cold hearts, unholy lives, inconsistent actions, neglected closets; these are the seeds which sow schisms in the body; but he who lives near to Jesus, wears his likeness and copies his example, will be, wherever he goes, a sacred bond, a holy link to bind the Church more closely than ever together. May God give us this, and henceforth let us endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I commend the text to all believers, to be practiced through the coming year. And to those who are not believers, what can I say but that I trust their unity and their peace may be broken for ever, and that they may be led to Christ Jesus to find peace in his death? May faith be given, and then love and every grace will follow, so that they may be one with us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

# A DISCOURSE FOR A REVIVAL SEASON.

NO. 608

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 8TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” — Jeremiah 8:19, 20.

THESE words, as they stand in the book of Jeremiah, were probably meant to set forth the sin of Israel. The prophet’s heart is very full of sadness; he can hear the shrieks and cries of the people in the streets of Jerusalem. They are moaning for sorrow, because of the oppression of the Chaldeans — the nation that dwelt afar off; and in the midst of their bitterness and woe, they remember the God whom they had forgotten in their prosperity: but this remembrance is not a gracious one; they do not remember him to humble themselves before him, but to bring accusations against him. They enquire, “Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her?” As if they felt, “The people of the Lord, the people of the Lord are we, and therefore he is bound to send us a deliverance.” They accuse the faithfulness of Jehovah, because he justly suffers them to be downtrodden for their sins. Then the Lord, speaking by the prophet, tells them the reason why, although present among them, he did not help them: “Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?” If they believed him to be present, why did they set up false gods? If they considered him to be their God, why did they turn aside to the vanities of the heathen? His presence among them had been the occasion of greater provocation, since they had mocked him to his face and set up idols in his own temple. In the

twentieth verse he represents the people as breaking forth into another dolorous and lamentable cry, “We thought that God would help us in the days of harvest; but the harvest is past. We dreamed that he would chase away our enemies when the summer months had come; but the summer is ended, and still Chaldea has her foot upon Judea’s neck, still we drink the wormwood and the gall, and our enemies open their mouths at us. The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

We find in the New Testament, that sometimes the apostles used the language of the prophets in other than the original sense. Finding the prophetic words to be expressive of a sense which they themselves wished to convey to the people, they did, as it were, take the horses and chariot of the prophet, and drive them in another direction. So I intend to do this morning. It strikes me that there is no text in Scripture more applicable to our present condition than this. “Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country.” We have been crying and pleading with God for the multitude of far-off sinners who know nothing of him.

We will begin, therefore, by dwelling upon the cry; then comes a question, a question much requiring earnest thought at present — “Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her?” — then we have another question, which may cause searching of heart both amongst saints and sinners — “Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?” — and our text concludes with another cry, not the cry of gracious souls for others, but the cry of graceless sinners for themselves,” The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

**I.** At the outset we have in the text A CRY.

Observe the word “Behold.” I have told you many times that wherever the word “behold” occurs in Scripture, it is a sort of sign-post to show that there is good entertainment within. God puts this “N.B.” in the margin, that we may observe well what it is that he is saying to us. The “behold” here is the mark of astonishment. We are to “Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people” as an unusual thing. So seldom does Israel cry unto the Lord, she is so negligent of prayer, she is so silent when she ought to be incessant in her petitions, that when at last she does cry, her voice is a wonder in God’s ears. I have felt this week in the state of mind which is indicated by that interjection, “Behold!” When I sat on this platform on Monday night, and marked your sobs, and tears, and heard the suppressed



sighs and groans of the great multitude then assembled, I could not but say. "Behold!" And yet it ought not to be a wonder, it ought not to be a strange thing for God's people to be in earnest, or for sinners to feel brokenness of heart. If prayer be the Christian's breath, why then, to see a multitude breathing, should never be a spectacle. If to pray unto God be the Christian's daily privilege, then to approach the throne of God with prevalent earnestness, should never be looked upon with astonishment. Yet, brethren, we must frankly confess that it is so. True prayer is an astonishing thing; prevalent intercession is an amazing thing: and if you want to see something that will really thrill you with a holy wonder, attend a prayer meeting where the Holy Ghost is present in the fullness of his power, and where the brethren pray, not as a mere matter of form, but as if filled with all the fullness of God. Such meetings as we have had during the past week are things to marvel at. Behold: it has become a wonder for God's people really to cry. Ah! there are some of you to whom weeping over sinners would be a novelty; some of you professors to whom agonizing for souls would be a new thing: you do pray for sinners in your usual prayers, but you do not know what it is to travail in birth for souls; you never feel as if your hearts would break if souls be not saved. You do not feel the burden of the Lord laid upon you till you are crushed in the dust and made to groan out, "God have mercy upon these poor perishing souls." With some of you it would be a great wonder to be really on a blaze; and if we heard you cry, we should be compelled to say, "Behold the voice of the cry of my people."

Notice how this prayer is described. It is a cry: "Behold the cry." A cry is the most natural form of utterance. It is a natural expression made up of pain and desire for relief. A cry is the first sign of human life; as if to indicate that we are most alive when most we cry; as if a cry were the way to life and the path to higher life ever afterwards. A cry! There is something cutting and piercing in it; it cleaves its way up to the throne of God. A spiritual cry! it is born in the heart, down deep in the inner recesses of regenerate nature. It is not a mere lip-worship, it is not a thing of the tongue and of the jaw. A cry! it comes from the very soul, and hence it reaches to God's ear and God's heart. A cry! it is a plaintive, bitter, painful thing: and, mark ye, God's people seldom get a blessing in the conversion of souls till their prayer turns into a cry mingled with weeping; and if there be sobbing and groaning, it is none the worse. You know, dear friends, the difference between the prayers which are not cries, and those which are.

When a brother merely prays what we call prayer, he stands up and utters very proper words, very edifying, very suitable no doubt, and then he has done. Another brother comes forward; he wants a blessing, he tells the Lord what he desires; he takes the promises, he wrestles with God and then he seems to say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." He cannot be satisfied till, with the cry of "Abba, Father," he has come before the throne and really obtained an audience with the Most High.

Note again, for every word of our text is suggestive, it is "Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people." It is not enough to be earnest, you must know what you are earnest about; the cry must have a voice which is as far as possible understood by yourself, and a voice which has a meaning in it before God. I am afraid there have been some meetings against which, the charge of fanaticism might be very fairly brought, because, while there was an admirable earnestness which it were well for colder Christians to copy, there was a lack of understanding, a want of really knowing what they were at. Beloved, we must be clear when we come before God that we really are asking for something. Our soul must prepare itself by meditation upon its own needs, and upon the needs of the people, to express an intelligent desire before God. Cry! cry aloud as much as you will; but remember, when "the voice said cry, "the prophet said, "What shall I cry?" And so when I come before God in prayer, I must ask him "What shall I cry?" and I must get a clear sense of what it is at which I am driving. For if an archer takes no aim, he may pull his bow with all his might, but he certainly is not likely to succeed. I must direct my prayer unto God, as David says, pull my bow, direct the arrow, take aim at the center of the target, and then when the arrow flies it is likely to reach its place. "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." What a mercy it is that our cries have a voice with God! Why, sometimes, when our cries have no voice for us, they have a voice with God. "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." When my desires are such that there are no words in any human language which could possibly express them, my heart does but let fall a tear, or lift a glance to heaven, and there is a voice in my cry. "Lord, take the meaning, take the meaning," said a poor man in an earnest prayer, to which I remember to have once listened — "I cannot tell thee, Lord, what I want, but take the meaning, take the meaning of my poor stammering words." There is a voice in our prayers as a Church, and I think it is, "Father, have mercy upon souls; Father, arise, and let thy kingdom come,

and let the name of thy Son Jesus be honored in the hearts of many; Father, let the Spirit who dwells in his Church, now work mightily, and get to thy name great renown in the midst of the dense crowd among whom we dwell." O God, this is the voice of the cry of thy people.

Further, study the matter of the voice — it was "for them that dwell in a far country." In what a far country does every sinner dwell!" He took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." The sinner who is nearest to God is still in a far country. You moralists, how far off you are from God. Dear Mr. Offord said, the other night, "Can any of you tell how far off God is from the unpardoned sinner? Remember, you are on this side of sin, and God is on the other side of it, but can any one tell how far God is from the other side of sin! His pure and holy eyes cannot even look on it. Then, how far must he be from it! You are just so far off from God as God is from sin, added to the breadth and length of sin itself. See your sin towering like a stupendous Alp; you cannot cross that barrier, and God is far away on the other side of that mountain. This is your wretched position, afar off from God." Now, the prayers, I hope, of God's people have been going up for all the far-off ones, that infinite mercy would make them nigh by the blood of Christ. There are certain special far-off ones whom we ought to mention in our prayers, and whom we ought to labor after in our Christian efforts. Do not forget the harlot when thou prayest: illustrious trophies of divine grace have been snatched from the kennel and the pavement. Do not forget the poorest of the poor, the vilest of the vile, and those who dwell in haunts where theft, ignorance, and crime do fester. Pray for these most; they most need your entreaties: and let your prayer be a cry — a cry like that of Jesus when he wept over Jerusalem. It would be one of the healthiest things in all the world for you Christian people, if you were to spend a day with City Missionaries and Bible Women, in the very worst of our back slums. If your cry did not come up then for those who dwell in a far country, I despair of your knowing what true religion means. The fact is, we do not face the sin of London. We, like the ostrich, bury our heads and shut our eyes, so as to avoid seeing the evil. We can so easily get to our places of worship along the front streets, in which there is a fringe of respectability and order, and so on, that we forget the dark lanes, the blind alleys, the dingy courts, the places where poverty, suffering, sin, and ignorance abound. O dear friends, if we do not go further, if we do not think of

foreign lands, we have still reason enough for putting up the voice of our cry for those who are “in a far country,” and yet dwell at home in England.

Still, I must have you remark another word in the text — for “those that dwell in a far country:” there are some of you who make a long abode in a far country. You were afar off from God eleven years ago; I preached at you then. You were afar off from God five or six years ago, when revivals were frequent. When this Tabernacle was opened, you came here and took your seat, and you were afar off from God then, and you are afar off now. The fact is, you have taken up your dwellings; you have made a settlement in one of the parishes of the City of Destruction; you are making out a claim to be enrolled in the devil’s register; you dwell in the far-off land. If you were uneasy and felt yourselves to be strangers and foreigners in the land of destruction, how would I clap my hands for joy; for you would soon be rid of your old master if you once felt sick of him. But no! you dwell in that country, and I suppose some of you always will do so, till you are taken from it to make your lodging-place in the flames of hell for ever. O, may God prevent it! but I fear it of some of you. There are some who listen to my words, who are made to feel under them. I heard but the other day of one who was set a trembling and shivering under the gospel; he could not but come and hear though it was always like a great hammer to him. His friends and companions by much persevering-effort laughed him out of coming here; they could not bear that he should come to hear the despised preacher; though he had been a dreadful drunkard and swearer before, and was then sober, yet they preferred his drunkenness to his coming here. Bitterly have they had to rue it; for he went back to his sins and became as gross a sinner as before; and then when he was killing himself with sin, they began to wish him to come here again, but it was too late, he would not come again; perhaps he dare not. A dreadful remorse settled upon him, and under its influence he put an end to his own existence. Take care, any of you who hate the gospel, that ye do not laugh at other men’s convictions; and when the gospel does come home with power to any, do not be the devil’s advocate and stand up and plead against God. God forgive those who do this, and may none of us be guilty of it! But oh! you dwell in this far country, some of you; you are easy in a state of danger and condemnation. It was only the other night, when we met at St. John’s Wood, that a man came into the vestry, made broken-hearted through the address of the evening. My dear brother Stott soon had him on his knees, and began to pray with him; and to my grief this man

said he used to hear me at Exeter Hall, and was much better in his outward life; while hearing me he thought of religion and lived soberly, but the Tabernacle was too far for him to come to it, and he would not go anywhere else, and therefore he went back to the world, and what seemed to be like a work of grace, proved to be only a work of nature. Let us be anxious concerning those who dwell in the far country, and are only for a time, as it were, taken out as on an excursion into the land of light, but who still have their parish settlement in the far country, and are numbered among the citizens of the City of Destruction, and are not among the people of God. O, for a cry this morning, another cry from God's people for those who dwell in a far country.

One very consoling thought is in the text. I must only hint at it. The cry is "The cry of the daughter of my people." O beloved, it is so sweet to think that our prayers, poor as they are, are the prayers of God's own people, and therefore they must be heard. You will say, "Is that a right argument?" Oh! yes it is. "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children." Remember that is how Christ puts it. You are the Lord's children, therefore he will hear you. If you were strangers it might be a different thing. Our prayers might very readily be pulled to pieces by critics, but our Father will not criticise them, because they are the cries of his own children. I do not think we set such store by believer's prayers as we ought to do. Would you let your child constantly cry to you and not answer him? I know you would not. Put it differently: would you let your brother plead with you and not grant him his desire if you could grant it? You have not a brother's heart if you would. Or I will touch you more closely. We love our wives — if your wife should ask for anything that would be for her good, and you could give it, would you refuse it? Husband, would you refuse it? You are no husband if you did. Look at Christ, the husband of the Church, do you think he will refuse the cry or his own spouse? What, shall his own dear bride come before him, and embrace his feet, and say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me;" and shall he who has espoused her unto himself in faithfulness, say to her, "I have bidden thee seek me, but I will not be found of thee; I have commanded thee to knock, but the door shall not be opened; I have told thee to ask, but thou shalt not receive?" O, slander not my loving Lord at this rate —

*"He feels at his heart all our sighs and our groans,  
For we are most near him, his flesh and his bones."*

Let us rejoice together in the spirit of prayer which God has given us. Let us try to foster it; let us be much in the exercise of it. During the coming week let us still continue to meet together to intercede at the throne of grace; and be this my reason for urging it upon you, that God has promised that when we cry, he will hear us: “He shall call upon me, and I will answer him,” “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.” “With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.”

**II.** We will now turn to the QUESTION: “Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her?”

I will answer that question at once in the affirmative. “The Lord is in Zion; her king is in the midst of her.” Having answered this question, it suggests many more. Let me put them to you. If the Lord be indeed in Zion, and the king be in the midst of her, why do we pray as if he were not? I find no fault with the prayers of my brethren when they ask for an outpouring of the Spirit — what they mean by their prayers is a very proper thing, but I am not certain that the expression is altogether the best that might be used. The Spirit of God is with his people. I could not, last Monday night, ask to have the Spirit of God poured out, for it was there. If at any time the Holy Spirit was with any men on earth, even at Pentecost, he was here last Monday night, as those present must have felt. We had not so much to ask for it as to be thankful for it. When two or three of you meet together in Christ’s name, do not meet unbelievably. Remember that he has said, “There am I in the midst of you.” Be content with that assurance; you have not, as it were, to mount up to heaven, that is, to bring Christ down; nor to descend into the earth, that is, to bring him up from the depths: he is with you! “Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?” “God dwelleth in you.” The Holy Spirit is given to the Church as a perpetual and abiding Comforter; and in the Church the Spirit of God always dwells. Do not pray, therefore, dear friends, as if God were not with you. “Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in the midst of her?” Do not pray, therefore, like the priests of Baal, as though your God were on a journey, or needed to be awakened out of sleep. He is with you, ready to answer by fire, if, like Elias, you have but faith with which to challenge his promise and his power.

Is the Lord with you. Then in the next place, let me ask you this question. Why do you despond because of your own weakness? “We have not a sufficient number of ministers; we have little wealth; we have few places of

public worship; we have few gifted members,” and so on. So some unbelievably talk. “Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her?” What more do you want? “Oh! we would like to be strong.” Why would you be strong? That you must be disqualified to be used by God? “No,” say you. Well, but you would be. What did the Lord say by the mouth of his servant Gideon? “The people are too many for me.” I never heard that the Lord said, “The people are too few” — never! “The people tire too many.” If Samson had the choice of weapons with which to rout his enemies, if he wished to do it in such a way as to make the feat illustrious, if there were before him a cannon, a fifty-pounder, and the jawbone of an ass, which would he take? Why, any fool can kill the enemy with a cannon, but it takes a Samson to smite them with the jawbone of an ass. And so, when God has the choice of weapons, and he always has, he chooses the weaker weapon, that he may get to himself the greater renown. My brother, glory in your infirmities — thank God for your weakness. There is room for God when you are empty, but when you are so full and so strong, and have such excellent machinery, and can do the work so well, why then you will attempt to do without your God, and a failure will be the result. But, O beloved —

*“When I am weak, then am I strong,  
Grace is my shield and Christ my song.”*

Let this silence for ever all your cavillings about weakness in Christian duty, “Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in the midst of her?” Did I hear you say, “I am a feeble woman, and I have too much work to do for God. I had better, perhaps, curtail it, or give it up?” My sister, now that you are weaker, try to do more, for now there is more room for your God. “Oh! I am a trembling, humble, unknown man, with but little talent, and what I have done has been about as much as I can do — I am afraid to venture more.” My brother, venture more; get on to the ground of “I cannot, but God can,” that is safe ground. “I can” is like the ice on which the boy tries to slide, and it lets him in; but “I cannot, but God can,” is terra firma-stand there, and you stand safely. There can never come a shock to the man who rests on the Eternal Rock — God all-sufficient. Rest you on that, and be glad.

Again, this question provokes another one. If God be with us, why these great fears about the prosperity of the Church? “Dr. Colenso becomes an infidel; Stanley becomes something very suspicious; multitudes of

ministers, so called, become Puseyites — what will become of the Church of Christ?” What will become of her? She will nestle where she always did nestle, beneath the eternal wings; and the more she gets rid of all her carnal confidences the better for her. “Oh what will become of true religion?” Beloved, become of true religion! it will go on winning and conquering, and with Christ upon the white horse of victory, riding in her fore-front, truth shall march on conquering and to conquer till he shall come whose right it is to reign. Be not discouraged, “Is not her king in the midst of her?”

Every now and then, when we try a new scheme, certain prudent brethren come and pull our ears a bit, and they say, “It is more than you can do; you must be prudent.” Yes, we are prudent, we claim to be prudent, we claim to have the highest prudence; for we reckon it always prudent to believe God, and always prudent to act upon God’s promise, and not according to carnal policy, nor the judgments of our proud, self-conceited, ignorant flesh. Brethren, if the king is in the midst of her, let us go on and conquer. You think you will never see such days as Pentecost; why not? “Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her?” You fear you will never see such wonders as were wrought by Whitfield and Wesley: “Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in her?” You fancy that Ireland will never receive the gospel; you think that heathen nations will never lay aside their idolatry. “Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in the midst of her?” You conceive that this is not the age of miracles, and you condemn us to go on in the everlasting jog-trot of propriety, in the do-nothing style of prescription, keeping in the perpetual cart-rut of conventionality, and never daring to blaze out a path for ourselves; “Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in the midst of her?” You do not believe there will be a thousand souls converted under one sermon; you do not think it is likely that the Church will be increased by hundreds in a day, or in a month: “Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her king in the midst of tier?” But, dear brethren, the God of Zion is here, the king of Zion is here. I grant you, we do not sufficiently recognize his presence; we are not, as we should be, obedient to his commands; but I charge you, O ye soldiers of the cross, believe in the presence of your captain, and press where ye see his helmet amidst the din of war. His cross is the great emblazoned banner which leads you on to glory. Press forward! to suffer, to deny yourselves, to bear witness for Christ; for the battle is the Lord’s, and the king himself fights in the van. “Her king is in the midst of her.” I want to see you trying deeds of daring,



noble deeds of consecration, generous gifts of liberality. I want you to be more earnest in prayer, more incessant in supplication, but, at the same time, more venturesome in your actions, more daring in your devotedness to Christ. The king is in the midst of her, the Lord is in Zion still. Sinner, I must leave this point, but there is one word of encouragement for you: —

*“Jesus sits on Zion’s hill,  
He receives poor sinners still.”*

He is in Zion, not on Sinai. Come to him, just as you are, come to him, for he is ready to accept you. The king with the silver scepter in his hand holds it out to every broken-hearted sinner. Come and touch it: he will give you perfect pardon in an instant, if your soul does but touch the silver scepter of his grace presented to you in Christ Jesus.

**III.** Time, however, will not stop for me, and therefore let us go on to the third point. That is, ANOTHER QUESTION. “Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?” Here is a question for the Lord’s people.

It becomes a very solemn thing when God is in his Church how that Church behaves herself. Suppose that Church to set up false principles: if her king were not there she might take the kings of the earth to be her head. But dare she do that when her king himself is there? She might begin to lean upon the civil arm if her God were not in her; but if her God be in her will she venture to do that in the face of the presence of God? Will she build up with untempered mortar the walls of human confidence, and rest upon an arm of flesh when Jehovah is looking on? In the matter of gospel ordinances it is a very important thing that we keep these ordinances as they were delivered. If the king were not in Zion it would not matter whether I practiced believers’ baptism or unbelievers’ baptism; but if he has commanded believers’ baptism how dare I baptize unbelievers in the presence of the king in Zion? How dare I profane his own ordinance to what it was never intended? It becomes a solemn question, therefore. If the king be in Zion, I must mind what doctrines I preach; the king is there to hear me; God is there to observe me. If God be in Zion, again, we must take care no wrong principles be let in. What! shall I allow the king’s enemies to eat and drink before the king’s own throne? Shall I wait upon the king’s foes and treat them as my friends when he is looking upon me with eyes of love? Let me take heed lest I prove a hypocrite and receive anger instead of love! Certainly he will look upon my sins with increased

wrath if I indulge them in his presence. Is God in Zion? Beloved Christian brother, how dare you set up that idol in your heart? Is it your child? Your wife? What is it? Can you worship idols when the king is in Zion, and God is in the midst of her? My dear friend, how can you be so worldly, so money-grasping? How is it that you can make wealth the main object of life when the king is in Zion? If he did not know about your worldliness, if he did not know about your coldness of heart, if he did not mark your inconsistency, if he could not see you in the path of sin, then I might not plead with you; but O Christian men and women, when God is present, how careful should we be. And he is present in his Church. Judas, where art thou this morning, for the Lord Jehovah is here in Zion; he has come to search Jerusalem with candles, and to punish the men who are settled upon their lees? What will he do with you? You think it a good thing to have God in Zion, but ye have desired in this, as far as you are concerned, a day of darkness and not of light, for when he cometh, he shall be as a consuming fire, and as fullers' soap. The Lord's special presence in his Church always involves a season of purification. A Church may go on with dead members for twenty years, but when the Lord comes, as soon as the wind sweeps through the forest, the dead branches crack and fall from the tree. A visitation from God to this Church will try you: it is all a blessing, but partly a trial. I believe that in every society and every Church where the presence of God comes, instead of the dead calm which they formerly enjoyed, there usually comes some outbreak, on the part of the flesh, against the powers or the Spirit; and they are discovered to be hypocrites, who otherwise might have gone on the whole of their lives with their vain profession — boasting in what they did not possess. Well, we must prepare for this ordeal. If God be in Zion, let us not provoke him to anger with our idolatry, nor with our strange vanities, but let us purge and humble ourselves before God.

But, then, this text has a particular voice to sinners. I want you to listen to me, you who are unconverted, while I just read this text slowly. You have been saying, "God is in the midst of his people — how is it I have not had a blessing?" I will ask you this question, "Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities?" I will turn that enquiry into English — it is in Hebrew now: "Why hast thou provoked me to anger with thy drunkenness and with thy mixing with vain companions? Do not ask why I have not called you by my grace — do not ask why you are not among the people of God. Answer my question — Why have ye

provoked me to anger, by indulging the lusts of the flesh, by leaving the paths of chastity and virtue, when ye knew the right and chose the wrong? Do not ask why the Word is not blessed to you; do not ask why you do not enjoy the prayer-meeting: answer my question first. Why hast thou provoked me to anger with thy tricks in trade, with thy Sabbath-breaking with thy lying, with thy loose songs, with thy mixing up with worldly company, with thy profanity? Do not ask me why the holy dew has not dropped on you; do not ask me why the holy wind has not come to quicken you, but answer this, ‘Why hast thou provoked me to anger with thy sins?’” Why, some of you have provoked God to anger these twenty or thirty years. I hear of you every now and then. You love me, I know you do, and you dare not leave my ministry, you cannot leave it, though it is full often a heart-searching ministry to you. God make it more so! But every now and then there comes an outbreak with you undecided ones. You must have the drink again, or you must go forth to lechery or sin. So it is with you; you would be saved, but you must be damned; you would have Christ, but you must have your sins; you would like to go to heaven, but you want to taste the sweets of damnation’s dainties on the road! How is it you will be such fools as to keep your filthy idols? My God, take thou the hammer and break their idols! O my God, be thou the great Iconoclast, and dash down the altars of their lusts, and clear a temple for thyself! You say “Amen” to that: I hope you do. Then God hear your cry this morning. Through the eternal Savior who drove the buyers and the sellers out of the temple with a scourge of small cords, and overturned the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said, “Take these things hence:” this day, may he come into your heart and overturn your sins, and say, “Take these things hence; I have bought that man with blood; I have loved him with an everlasting love; I have brought him under the sound of the ministry; I purpose to bring him to myself; I have ordained him to wear a crown and wave a palm, and be wrapped about with the fair white linen of the righteousness of saints; he shall be mine when I make up my jewels. Out with you, intruders! Away, ye devils! Away, ye lusts! Ye may be called Legion, but I, Jehovah-Jesus, cast you out, for this man is mine.” Lord, do it; do it this morning! The voice of the cry of thy people comes up for those who are afar off, that their vanities may be given up, and their sins may be dashed in pieces, that they may be thine for ever and ever.

**IV.** The last point is, ANOTHER CRY. I wish I might hear this cry this morning, for then I should not hear it in the world to come, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

I have been talking to you, now I want you to talk for yourselves in your heart to God. There came a harvest of souls to this Church from the very day when first we began to preach the gospel here, and we have gathered such numbers into the Church as probably never were received into any one Church in Europe in any age at one time, except in the days of the apostles. That harvest is only past so far as the blessing which we have received has been received, for the harvest still continues in all its fullness. But, ah! the harvest has missed you. Some of you have had to move away, or the Word ceases to be a blessing to you as it once was. This voice has grown stale to you, has no trumpet-ringing clang about it as it once had: “The harvest is past.” Very blessed times have passed over this Church. We have had a summer; oh! what divine warmth has been felt. The sun has shone strong in upon us, and every plant has breathed forth its perfume — every plant that the Lord hath planted. But many a Monday night, many a prayer-meeting night has gone, the summer has ended, and ye are not saved! ye are not saved! Do you remember, some of you, that sermon in the Music Hall, from the text, “Compel them to come in?” Then we had a harvest, and then we had a summer, but you were not compelled to come in. You were not saved! You recollect some Monday nights when we have been bowed down and broken in heart before God in prayer; we have then had harvests and summers, but you are not saved! And now, last Monday night what a visitation we had! what a harvest! what a summer! but you are not saved. I wish you would put up that cry, “Now, Lord, I am not saved! Lord I am not saved! I am not saved from my hard heart! I am not saved from my love of sin! I am not saved from the guilt of sin! I am without God, without Christ, and a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel! I am not saved!” There are some of you I could speak to very specially; we pray for you, but you are not saved! You have a brother who prays for you, a sister who prays for you, a father and mother who have prayed for you; but still you are not saved! Husband! you have a wife who never ceases to intercede for you; but you are not saved! We thought you would have been converted long ago; there have been many hopeful signs about you, but you have disappointed us, you are not saved! Take heed, take heed, there may be more in the words that I now speak than if they were my words; for, to this day, God sometimes speaks to men prophetically by his truly

sent ministers. The day is near with some of you, if you do not repent, when, tossing upon the bed of sickness you will have to cry in the sight of the approach of death, “the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved.” You will look back upon these Sunday gatherings with a very different eye from that with which you look upon them now. You will remember your gospel privileges and value them very differently from what you do now. When you seem to hear the tolling of your own death-knell, then you will value the Sabbath chime. And take heed yet a little further! There will come a day when you will lift up your eyes in hell, some of you, being in torments, and then, as you look up and see the people of God glorified at God’s right hand, you will have to say, “The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and I am not saved.” And let me tell you, those words will ring very differently then from what they do now, when you have

*“To linger in eternal pain,  
yet death for ever fly,”*

to have to say, “I am not saved” will be dreadful. Then the Lord will come. We are looking for his coming; and when he comes his people shall reign with him; they shall rise from the dead in triumph. And when their days of earthly reign shall be over, the great archangel shall sound the trumpet for the second resurrection; and when you wake up and find that the righteous have all risen before you, and have received their crowns and their rewards, then, as you see the harvest of God borne by the angelic reapers up to the sky, as you see the brightness of the glory of the new Jerusalem taken up into the clouds, to be withdrawn from the place where men shall stand to be judged, ye will say, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” Oh! then you will cry, “Rocks, hide us! mountains, fall upon us! We are not saved.” Those mountains shall have no ears for you — those rocks shall have no bowels of compassion for you: there shall only be a dread reverberation of your awful cry, “We are not saved — we are not saved!” And when hell opens wide her jaws, and her tongue of fire shall lick up the ungodly, then, “We are not saved! We are not saved! We are not saved!” will be in dolorous contrast to that ever-swelling, ever-increasing song, “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” Shall it be “Hallelujah!” sinner, or shall it be “We are not saved?”

May God's eternal grace work in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure, and so make you to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; and then may the question be decided, and may you not have to say for ever, "We are not saved." May God bless these words for Christ Jesus' sake. Amen.

# KNOWLEDGE COMMENDED.

NO. 609

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 15TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many.” — Daniel 11:32, 33.

THE uninspired book of the Maccabees is perhaps the best interpreter of this passage in Daniel. The prophet, we think, refers to the great persecution under Antiochus, when the followers of Judas Maccabaeas, knowing their God and keeping close to him amidst general defection, refused to bow before the idols of Syria; these were strong by God’s grace, and did great exploits: wonders of valor we read of in the history of Judas and his brethren, and wonders of heroic suffering never surpassed are recounted of the mother and sons and those other martyrs who, under tortures of the most amazing character, held fast their faith even to the end. In that age there were some who were stoned, who were sawn asunder, who felt the violence of fire, and yet were not separated from their God by all that the foe could do. We have a lesson to learn from the text before us, and we therefore leave the historical references and proceed to enter into the teaching of the text. It appears that the people who did all this were a knowing people and an understanding people. Those by whom the exploits were performed were not ignorant, but a people who did know their God; and those who helped to keep up the light of Israel in the midst of the thick darkness were not uninstructed themselves, but they were a people who did understand.

Our subject this morning is knowledge, and especially the knowledge of the things of God. The matter is very urgent and important at this season when we are receiving so many young converts into the Church, many of

whom need much teaching in the things of God. It lies heavily on my heart that it is my bounden duty to urge these young ones, since they know the elements of the Christian faith, to strive with diligence to learn more and more of the higher truths; and if they have received some insight into the wondrous revelation of divine love, to press forward till they comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. The question is often put to us in a very general and vague manner, "Is knowledge a good thing or not?" We are expected to give an answer promptly and without reserve; and if we do so we shall very likely be caught in a trap." Knowledge: is it a good thing in itself or not?" That depends upon several things. You might as well ask me whether air is a good thing. Why, of course, speaking loosely, it is; but then there is much bad air in old wells and cellars and so on, which will destroy life, and therefore you cannot expect me to say at once, if I know you are on the catch, either "Yes," or "No." Air is a good thing, as a general rule; the lungs require it, man must have it: it is a good thing. So is knowledge. Knowledge heaves the intellectual lungs: it is a good thing; but then there is noxious knowledge, which it were infinitely better for us never to receive, just as there is pestilential air. Is food a good thing? Yes; but if you are alluding to the decayed meat which was seized in the market, or to adulterated drinks, I am not in such a hurry to answer you. I want to know what sort of food you are alluding to. Food, in the abstract, is a good thing, but not food universally; for putrid meats will engender disease, and bring on ten thousand maladies, and destroy the life which food is meant to sustain. So is it with knowledge; it is the food of the mind; and yet there is a knowledge which is deadly, poisonous, infectious, full of all manner of mischief, and they who know nothing of it are wise. Is water a good thing? Again I answer, "Yes," in the abstract. So many watery particles are absolutely necessary to the building up and sustenance of the human frame, that every thirsty man knows that water is good. Yet there is bad water; there have been poisoned wells: water stagnates and becomes putrid and injurious to life: water is good take it abstractedly. But yet there is a knowledge which, like stagnant or poisoned water, may destroy the soul. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil stood in Paradise, mark that — but it ruined Paradise, mark that too! A man may know much, and he may still stand in his integrity; but the chances are, that while men are what they are, there will be a serpent in the tree of knowledge, seeking the ruin of souls. If you want to judge concerning the good or evil of knowledge, you must ask yourself, What is its source? To have one's lips touched with a



live coal is a choice blessing if the seraph bring that coal from off the altar; but there are tongues which are set on fire of hell — and who desires to feel such accursed flame? You must know whence cometh the coal before you may consent that it shall touch your lips. Knowledge may be tested by considering its character. Some knowledge is like the light of the moon-clear, cold, barren, if not deleterious to health; but heavenly knowledge is fructifying, healthful, and genial, chasing away disease like the warm rays of the sun. You may make knowledge good or evil, by the way in which you use it. If it be a torch, you may carry it with you to kindle the flame of Tophet's fire; or, on the other hand, by that heaven-lit torch you may, through grace, find your way to the gates of Paradise. Judge of knowledge, therefore, ever with discretion, and while you seek it as in the abstract an eminently good thing, yet be not in haste to plunge yourself into every abyss to find its bottom, nor into every burning crater to fathom its depth. I know enough of poison without drinking it, and enough of sin without running into it. This much by way of introduction: we come now to the text.

Here we have knowledge of a peculiar kind referred to; then its happy influence, it makes men strong to do great exploits; next, we shall consider the means of its attainment; fourthly, just a hint as to its danger; and fifthly, the duty of spreading it, contained in the thirty-third verse, "They that understand among the people shall instruct many."

**I.** First, then, there is A SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE REFERRED TO, "the people who do know their God."

To know God is the highest and best form of knowledge. But what can we know of God? Nothing but what he has been pleased to reveal to us. He hath revealed something of himself in the Book of Nature, and much more in the Book of Revelation; and he hath been pleased to cast a vivid light upon the Book of Revelation by manifesting himself unto his people as he doth not unto the world. Those who know the Lord should believe in the unity of his essence and subsistence. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." There should be no mistaken notions here: the unity of the Godhead is fundamental, and mistakes here are fatal. We should know the Lord in the plurality of his persons. God said, "Let us make man in our own image." Let not man be content until he knows something of the "us" from whom his being was derived. Endeavour to know the Father; bury your head in his bosom in deep repentance, and confess that you are not

worthy to be called his son; receive the kiss of his love; let the ring which is the token of his eternal faithfulness be on your finger; sit at his table and let your heart make merry in his grace. Seek to know much of the Son of God who is the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person, and yet in unspeakable condescension of grace became man for our sakes; know him in the singular complexity of his nature: eternal God, and yet suffering, finite man; follow him as he walks the waters with the tread of deity, and as he sits upon the well in the weariness of humanity. Be not satisfied unless you know something of Jesus Christ as your friend, your brother, your husband, your all. Forget not the Holy Spirit: endeavor to get as clear a view as you can of his nature and character, his attributes, and his works. Behold that Spirit of the Lord, who first of all moved upon chaos, and brought forth order; who now visits the chaos of your soul, and makes order there. Behold him as the Lord and giver of spiritual life, the Illuminator, the Instructor, the Comforter and the Sanctifier. Behold him as, like holy unction, he descends upon the head of Jesus, and then afterwards rests upon you who are as the skirts of his garments. Get a clear idea, then, of the Trinity in Unity. Do not reason about it; do not try to understand it: remember, it is not your duty to comprehend, but to apprehend such truths as these: you are to believe, rather than to reason. One God in the Trinity of his persons let us know and worship; for remember that, those who do not now this, very seldom know much else about divine things; for a very remarkable fact it is, that when the doctrine of the Trinity is given up, the other doctrines of the evangelical system are pretty sure to be cast to the winds. This doctrine of the Trinity in Unity seems to be the place of standing or falling with public teachers and private believers.

Let us study to be well instructed in the divine attributes, and ask for grace to know them all. Be not like those who dream of a God who is all love, and nothing else. These persons talk in maudlin sentences, as if they believed in an effeminate God, who winks at sin, and is utterly destitute of one single atom of integrity or holiness. Believe God to be what he most certainly is, a God terrible as well as benevolent, who will by no means spare the guilty, and yet passeth by transgression, iniquity, and sin. See God in the suffering body and soul of Christ Jesus upon Calvary, and you will understand how he is severely just in punishing sin in him upon whom sin was made to meet, and yet supremely gracious in providing such a way of escape for guilty souls. Do not be content with a maimed and distorted

view of God's attributes; feel him to be omnipresent: let it be your delight to know that you have not to call upon him as one who is afar off, but ever near at hand. Recognize him as omnipotent: know that there is nothing which he cannot do, and therefore doubt him not. Forget not his absolute sovereignty, but meekly submit to it. The failure of many men in their ideas about God is that they imagine him to be subject to law, instead of being the source and fountain of all law. They arraign his actions at their bar, and forget his terrible reply, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" They have not heard the solemn voice, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Although to perfection you cannot find out God, yet do not worship him as did the Athenians under the title of "The Unknown God." Endeavour to understand how love unbounded meets with justice unlimited, and sovereignty without control; how 'holiness becometh his house,' and yet how tender-hearted affection towards his creatures ever dwelleth in him. Do not worship ignorantly! Whatever else you do not know, do know the character of your God. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." Then labor to know God in his actions; study well the past. Do not be ignorant of the great work of creation; if you have the skill, look at that creation in the light of modern science so far as that light is really derived from facts and not from conjectures. Pry into God's great works in providence: begin your pilgrimage of study at the gates of Eden and travel onward to the present time; float safely in your meditations with Noah in the ark; study the wonderful justice of God in thus sweeping away the race of men. I have not time to linger on any one particular spot this morning — if I might, I should have selected the Red Sea. Remember what Jehovah did at the Red Sea and by the brooks of Arnon! Tell how he made bare his arm, and swept away his foes! Take Miriam's timbrel and sing unto the Lord who triumphed gloriously! Or, if that content you not, remember Og and Sihon, or exult over Sisera in Deborah's song: "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." Think of the deeds of God in later times, when he smote Sennacherib, and laid his hosts dead at midnight. Tell how he brought forth his people from the land of captivity with rejoicing, and built up the walls of Jerusalem once more. Let, especially, the actions of God concerning Christ be very dear to you. Fly back to the eternal council

— you will not be intruding if your faith can enter that great council chamber of eternity. Think of the covenant, the suretiship, the provision, the Almighty decree. See Jesus Christ coming forth from the bosom of the Father, amid the song of angels, to hang upon a woman's breast. Trace the history of your incarnate God; make the life of Christ to be with you a household study; know every corner of it. Never let a question be asked of the youngest of you, concerning the life of Jesus, which you cannot answer. The rhetorician studies the classics; the old Roman orators were familiar with Demosthenes and the Greek poets; so let the Christian make the life of Jesus his first study, and with every single passage in it let him be familiar. Know the Savior from the weakness of the cradle to the triumph of his ascension, when, leading captivity captive, he mounted the Father's throne to reign for ever.

If you have mastered all this, seek to know something of the leaching of the Spirit of God concerning the plan of salvation. Do not be content to be saved in the dark: try to find out how it is that you are saved. You are on a rock; but look at the rock, and understand why it is a rock, and how you came to be standing on it. I believe that very much of current Arminianism is simply ignorance of gospel doctrine; and if people began to study their Bibles, and to take the Word of God as they find it, they must inevitably, if believers, rise up to rejoice in the doctrines of grace. Bolingbroke was far gone in infidelity, and yet when he met Mr. Whitfield one morning he said to him, "Sir, if the Bible be true, Calvinistic doctrines, such as you preach, are most certainly taught in it; and though I neither receive the Bible nor Calvinistic doctrines, at any time my pen is very much at your service, if you want to have these doctrines proved from the Bible." I am persuaded it is so. Dear friends, I would not have you merely unite with the Christian Church, and say, "Yes, I believe in Christ," but I want you — and here I speak to you who are lately added to the Church — I want you to know where this great scheme began. I want you to know how it is that the blood of Christ takes away sins. To know the fact is very precious, but to understand the reason of that fact is so comforting, so establishing, so every way to be desired, that I would have you study much the Word of God till you get a clear view of the whole scheme, from election onward to final perseverance, and from final perseverance to the second advent, the resurrection, and the glories which shall follow, world without end. I have thus brought out what I think is the idea of the text about the people knowing their God; but we must not overlook that little word their —

“They that know their God.” It is not “they that know God,” but “their God.” To know anything of him aright, you must get a firm hold of God; he must be your God. “There is no praying,” said one old man who used to be much in prayer, “till you come to a close grip.” There must be a blessed familiarity with God; you must know him to be yours, because he gave himself to you in the eternal covenant; yours, because he hath promised himself to you in his Word; yours, because you take him by an act of simple faith; yours, because every day you put yourself beneath his guidance and desire to be a soldier under his command; yours to have and to hold through life, in death, and in eternity, because he hath laid hold of you, and will hold you even to the end. “The people that do know their God.” Ah! that is one of the choicest things a human tongue can ever say, “My God! my God!” Ah! Thomas, thou hadst learnt a great lesson when with thy hand in Jesus’ side thou couldst say not only, “Lord, God,” but “My Lord, and my God!” O, may you all be among the people who know their God.

**II.** THE HAPPY INFLUENCE OF THIS KIND OF KNOWLEDGE next requires our notice.

The text shows that it strengthens, gives courage, energy, vigor, resolution, daring, success. They who know their God are strong, and do exploits. The Romish Church thinks a very great deal of implicit faith, of the faith which cannot apprehend what it believes. Now we agree with Romanists in this — that we are to believe what we cannot comprehend; but we do not agree with them in the other — that we are to believe what we cannot apprehend. You remember the faith of the collier; “What do you believe?” “I believe what the Church believes.” “But what does the Church believe?” “Oh! the Church believes as I believe.” “Well, but what do you and the Church believe?” “Why, we both believe the same thing.” Now Romanists may set great store by that kind of faith, and they go the right way to induce it very often by denying the Bible to the common people, or by neglecting education so that the masses are unable to read the Word when they can get it. If you say, “You believe as I believe, and I believe as you believe, and we both believe the same thing,” I tell you that you are no credit to your teacher, and the sooner you give up your faith the better. A man cannot believe what he does not apprehend. He may say, “I am prepared to believe it when I do apprehend it;” but as to believing what he has never been told, it is quite impossible. If there be any dogmas of Mother Church which I have not heard of, I do not believe them, and if I

stand up and say I do, I am talking nonsense. If I say I am prepared to believe when I shall have been told, that may be; but I cannot already believe them, for belief must be parallel with apprehension; a man must apprehend a thing or he cannot believe it.

Knowledge strengthens the spiritual man, because, in the first place, it is that on which faith has to feed. Where there is faith, knowledge is a great gain. This will be clear to all of you who read attentively your Bible, because the words “to know” and “to believe,” are frequently used in Scripture almost synonymously. If you turn to the tenth chapter of St. John’s gospel, you will find there at the thirty-eighth verse, that the Savior said, “But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.” And then in the first epistle of St. John, in the second chapter, at the third verse, we have an expression which is tantamount to the one I have already referred to. “And hereby we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments.” We are sure of our faith and of our knowledge by walking in obedience to him. The source from which Christian faith comes proves the importance of knowledge. How does faith come to the Christian? By sitting still and looking at fifty or a hundred wax candles? By admiringly gazing upon a placid Madonna at the corner of the street? By hearing language which I cannot comprehend repeated by men in a peculiar dress? Never, according to Scripture. How then? “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” There is the whole history of faith — the Word of God gives the teaching which blesses us with knowledge, and then comes faith. The sight of the eye, religious awe, impressions of dread, emotions of wonder, these do not give faith; but hearing something which I can apprehend is the means of my believing. Believers are constantly spoken of in the Scriptures as being people who are enlightened and taught of the Lord; they are said to “have an unction from the Holy One,” and it is the Spirit’s peculiar office to lead them into all truth, and all this for the increase and the fostering of their faith. They are not kept in darkness that they may believe, but put into the light that they may believe. Here is the difference between the religion of Christ, and the religion of antichrist. Moreover, there is provided in the Church of God an agency which proves that knowledge is to be the food of faith. To what end is the ministry ordained but this — “For the edification of the saints”? Are we not called teachers? That preacher who does nothing but excite the people, who teaches nothing and declares no definite doctrine, had better lay aside his

office and take to some honest employment where he may do no more mischief. Teaching is what we want: a true minister is a teacher to his people, a steward of God bringing forth things “both new and old.”

You see, then, that if knowledge be under God the Holy Ghost truly the food of faith, then, in order to be strong, since faith is the very sinew of human strength, we must get much knowledge of the things of God. The people who do know their God shall be strong in faith, and shall do great exploits.

Think again, dear friends, of the influence of faith upon all the other graces. Love is the sweetest of all; but how can I love till knowledge gives me a view of Christ? Knowledge opens the door, and then through that door I see my Savior. Or I may use another expression; knowledge takes the portrait of Christ, and when I see that portrait then I love him. I cannot love a Christ I do not know, at least, in some degree; and if I know nothing about the excellencies of Christ, what he has done for me, and what he is doing now, I cannot love him: in Christ’s case to know is to love, and the more I know the more I shall love.

Look at hope again. How can I hope for a thing if I do not know of its existence? Hope may be the telescope, but then till I get knowledge there is something in front of the glass, I can see nothing whatever; but knowledge takes away the impediment, and then when I look through the optic glass I can see the glory to be revealed; but I cannot hope for that of which I know nothing whatever. I must know there is a heaven, or I cannot hope for it.

Then, take patience. How shall I have patience unless I have heard, as James says, of the patience of Job; unless I know something of the sympathy of Christ, and understand the good which is to come out of the correction which my heavenly Father gives me? Knowledge gives me reasons for patience. I cannot stop on this point, but there is no one single grace of the Christian which, under God, will not be fostered and brought to perfection by holy knowledge. Knowledge becomes, then, of the very highest importance.

Again, from the connection of the text, it appears that many were led astray in the days of Antiochus. “Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong,” and so on. It seems, then, that to know God is a means of

steadfastness. Who are the people that are greatly troubled by new systems of philosophy and infidelity which are constantly springing up? Why, the people who do not know their God. Certain young folks say to me, "O sir, I have read a new book: there is a great discovery made about development. Animals were not created separately, but grew out of one another by degrees of gradual improvement." Go and ask your grandmother about it! And what does she say as she takes off her spectacles? Why, she says, "I was reading 'There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.'" Say to her, "Do you not feel alarmed about your faith?" "No," she says, "if they were to discover fifty thousand things, it would not trouble me, for 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'" You think her a simpleton, perhaps: she might far more properly think you the same. Every now and then there comes up a heresy: some woman turns prophetess and raves; or some lunatic gets the idea that God has inspired him, and there are always fools ready to follow any impostor. Who are those that go after them? Those who do not know God; for those who do know him, say —

*"Should all the forms that men devise  
Assault my faith with treacherous art,  
I'd call them vanity and lies,  
And bind the gospel to my heart."*

Brethren, if a truly godly minister has for six or seven years been teaching a people, and he gives them good solid truth, and they receive it and understand it, I should not like to see the wolf come in; but I do not believe he would do much mischief, for many strong men will be found to slay the intruder: but if there be a ministry which only consists of preaching up moral duties and creating the titillation of excitement, then, if the wolf comes, he may just glut himself with the blood of professors, for there is no strength in them to resist him. We want sound doctrine to give us stability. May God grant that we may be rooted and grounded in Christ, that we may know the things which are revealed to us of God.

Only once more, and then we leave the second point. Knowledge will clearly be seen by you to be a great means for enabling you to do great exploits, if you think of its bearing upon usefulness. A Christian without knowledge, for instance, is an admirable man in the holiness of his life; but to what other end, to what other purpose can you put him? He must not enter the pulpit — if he be already there, he had better retire. He must not



be a Church-officer. It would be foolish to choose the feeblest among us to be our leaders. He is scarcely of any use in the Sunday-school class—he may manage to hear the children read, and to wile away the time; but if he were a Christian instructor, he would open up the Scriptures and explain them. Do not, any of you, feel grieved at what I am saying. I am speaking to those who have been lately converted. You are believers: I am rejoicing in it — rejoicing that you are converted, however little your knowledge; but I want you to feel dissatisfied with your ignorance, and to seek, in order to your usefulness, to know the ground and the reason for the things you believe, and to understand, as far as you can, the deep things of God. Do not be content to be always children—you will never be men unless you are children first; do not be content to be stunted in your understanding, but ask to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for the sake of your own usefulness.

### **III.** We come, in the third place, TO NOTICE HOW THIS KNOWLEDGE MAY BE OBTAINED.

Time has fled, and therefore we will not enlarge, but just give the outline. Search the Scriptures. Do not merely read them — search them; look out the parallel passages; collate them; try to get the meaning of the Spirit upon any one truth by looking to all the texts which refer to it. Read the Bible consecutively: do not merely read a verse here and there—that is not fair. You would never know anything about John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* if you opened it every morning and read six lines in any part and then shut it up again; you must read it all through if you want to know anything about it. Get those books, say Mark or John; read Mark right through from beginning to end; do not stop with two or three verses, or a chapter, but try to know what Mark is aiming at. It is not fair to Paul to take his epistle to the Romans and read one chapter: we are obliged to do it in public service; but if you want to get at Paul's meaning, read the whole epistle through as you would another letter. Read the Bible in a commonsense way. Do not read it on your knees, as I have known some people do, it is an awkward posture: get into an easy chair: read it comfortably. Pray after you have read it as much as you like, but do not make a penance of what ought to be a pleasure. And when you are reading it, if you come to a knotty point, do not skip it. You have all some Christian friend who knows more than you do; go to him and try to get the thing explained. Above all, when you have read any passage, and do

understand it, act it out, and ask the Spirit of God to burn the meaning into your conscience till it is written on the fleshy tables of your heart.

Next, use good helps to your Bible. I do not know better helps for the common mass of people than “The Confession of Faith,” or the little Catechism. With the little Catechism and texts of Scripture, any believer, however ignorant, can in a very short time get a good view of the things of God. I believe that the Westminster Assembly’s Shorter Catechism has more divinity in it than nine out of ten of the modern octavos; and if any person would know and understand that, he need not be afraid but what he will be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him, provided the hope is in him.

Next, be sure to attend a teaching ministry. Do not be always after sweets. Do not be running after prophesyings and novelties. Try to see the whole range of Scripture. Believe in Calvinism; but if there be a single truth which only the Arminians hold, believe that too. Do not put your feet into Chinese shoes to be squeezed after the current fashion into an orthodox shape; be willing to have a broad understanding: receive anything which God has revealed, and be content to take the whole of God’s truth, whether you can make it into a system or not.

Then I should say, if you want to understand much, be much in prayer. Prayer cuts many a Gordian knot. Be much in communion with God. You cannot know God at a distance. Get close to him: come to him in the name of Jesus Christ — come very close to him. The other night, in prayer, I remember, by mistake, quoting an old Scripture — that we might weep, like the priests, “between the porch and the altar” — and I was corrected by a brother for it; he said, “We do not want to stand between the porch and the altar, because, in prayer, the proper place for a Christian is farther in beyond the altar; the sacrifice is finished, and we are to go through the court of the priests, and enter into the most holy place — into that which is within the veil, whither our forerunner is for us entered.” Endeavour, therefore, to get a good view of the types of Scripture. When you have made a mistake about them, be willing to be corrected; but try to understand the types by getting the substance in your own experience — that is the best way of knowing them. And, remember, there is one school to which you can all go, where you will all learn; our Savior says, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or

whether I speak of myself.” Practical holiness is a grammar-school, in which we may learn the doctrines of grace.

**IV.** And now I want to say ONE WORD BY WAY OF CAUTION, and it shall be scarcely more than a word.

Remember that knowledge of itself — with all its excellencies and virtues when God blesses it — has a danger in it to you. “Knowledge,” says the apostle, “puffeth up.” So it does. You may get proud of what you know, and then God forgive you, and deliver you from it! And, moreover, you may get so positive about what you know, that you may have made up your mind never to know any more. I know some of that kind — they know everything — every doctrine which is brought forward that they have not received already must be rejected, because they have made up their minds that they have the whole of revelation by heart; they have “meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure,” and found out wisdom to perfection. Do not get into that state. Your knowledge may even make you supercilious to the people of God. You may look down with contempt on some who do not know so much as you, and yet they may have twice your holiness and be doing more service to God; for knowledge is after all but a talent, and grace is always better than gifts. Try to get grace to make the gift right, and as you grow in knowledge which may prove to be the sails, humility will prove an admirable ballast. To this end I ask the help of the Holy Spirit, that what you know may be rightly known, for then it will not exalt you, but make you lie at the foot of the cross. O that God might thus teach and thus instruct us all.

**V.** And now to close: here is THE DUTY OF SPREADING THIS KNOWLEDGE WHEN WE HAVE IT. “They that understand among the people shall instruct many.”

It is a prophecy which is fulfilled, but it is also a suggestion of a duty which we have to carry out. Are we instructing many, those of us who know the Lord? “Well,” says one, “I am; I am endeavoring to do my best in the Sabbath-school, in the catechumen class, and so on.” God speed you, dear friend; God speed you in your good work! God speed you a thousand-fold more than you have yet learned to ask or even think! But there must be some here who are not teaching others. Of course our business is to begin with teaching our own children. When the services used to be in the

morning and afternoon in the olden times, the evening was generally spent with the children in teaching and catechising. I do not think we in London could go back to the old plan; but I am not sure that the present one is an improvement, whether the children might not learn much more if the parents did give the Sabbath evening constantly to their instruction. At any rate, no mother, no father, especially no mother, should suffer a Sabbath to pass over her head, if she knows the things of God, without having her little ones around her, and teaching them what she herself knows. The Sunday-school teacher does well, but he cannot relieve parents from the responsibility of teaching their own children.

Others might take a wider range. Might you not get up Bible-readings at your house. If God has taught you a truth which others do not know, could not you find others in your neighborhood who might be willing to come to your house and understand the things of God from you or some one else? If they will not come, have you not the instinct to get at them some other way? Cannot you so weave the common events of life into a means of Christian instruction that you are truly "all things to all men"? Put in words edgewise, so as to instruct casual visitors. We have not a system of class-meetings as among our Wesleyan friends; it would be a great mercy if we had something like them; and it would be a good thing if the elders of this Church would constantly look after the younger ones. Get seven, eight, or nine, to meet you as a class; get a text-book and study it by the light of the Word of God. We have some admirable teachers here, but I believe we have some who might teach a great deal more, who are not doing it. Some of you are living at a distance: your work cannot be very well carried on in connection with this place. What does that matter! I would as soon you taught elsewhere; so long as you are working for God it does not matter whether it is here or there. If you are Christian people belonging to this Church, your first duty is here; but if from any other circumstance you cannot throw in your strength with us, why, do it elsewhere. If you want to go elsewhere, of course we are sorry to lose you, but, we say, go by all means if you can serve God better. If you feel you must attend our ministry because it suits your mind, why come among us, and aid our efforts to do good. Do, at any rate, teach what God has told you! If God has lighted your candle, try to shine and let other candles be lit by you.

I have said thus much on this point, and I close with this remark — there are some here who cannot be exhorted to learn and know much of God, because they have not yet begun to know themselves; they do not know

this simple truth, “That Christ came into the world to save sinners:” they know it from theory, but that is of very little use. May they know it in their heart by saying, “Jesu, I am a sinner: since thou camest to save sinners, I give myself to thee. O save me: I trust thee to save me.” God bring you to this state, and when you have received Christ, then endeavor, as much as lieth in you —

*“To teach to sinners round,  
What a dear Savior you have found.”*

May the Master bless these words, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

# THE GREAT PRIVATION: OR, THE GREAT SALVATION.

NO. 610

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been am a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.” — Isaiah 48:18.

FROM this verse we may learn that when God smites men on account of sin, it gives him no pleasure. The voice which speaks is not that of the seraphic prophet, but it is the voice of the Lord God of the prophets himself. The manner is not merely the majestic formula, “Thus saith Jehovah,” but it is supplemented with words intended to remind us of his graciousness and his goodwill. “Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer,” he who rescued thee from perils past, “the Holy One of Israel,” the faithful Promiser, who hath shown thee his counsels and his statutes. Moreover, he challenges attention with more simple, touching mementoes of his kindness, when he adds, “I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.” As the instructor of their childhood and the guide of their riper years, he first expresses the most natural interest in their welfare, and then pitifully bewails the folly of his children. Speaking after the manner of men, to chasten his own people is a pain and a grief to his heart: “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” John Knox said that he never chastised his children without tears in his own eyes. Jeremiah, in the bitterest chapter of his unparalleled Lamentations, bears this grateful witness to our covenant God: “He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” And surely if in the gentler chastisement of his hands, the Most High takes no pleasure, much less can he find delight in that withering curse which destroys the finally impenitent. Beloved, the eternal torment of men is no joy to God. The ruin of a sinner gives him no

satisfaction. While the calamity is such as he only can estimate; the warnings, expostulations, and entreaties he hath spoken furnish proof upon proof of his pity. Hear his own words, nay, hearken as he swears, listen to his own oath: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Not vengeance, but mercy: to kiss the returning prodigal; to wash the feet of the guilty sinner; to press the rebel to his bosom, and to adopt him into his family — this is happiness to God. When, therefore, he rises to judgment and pronounces the fearful sentence, "Depart, ye cursed," and casts down the transgressor to hell, and delivers him over unto the tormentors, though he vindicates the justice of his throne, it is "His strange work, to bring to pass his act, his strange act." Even the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction have experience of God's longsuffering. How tardily he puts off the time! How often he tarries before he inflicts the stroke! How he hides his power while he unfolds his patience; he refrains the fierceness of his anger, because he is "God, and not man!" "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

Let me appeal to you then, my hearers, those of you who have entertained hard thoughts of God, correct them now, banish them from your breasts tonight. You may take pleasure in the damnation of your fellow men: my God hath no such pleasure; you may find gratification in your sins, but he grieves over them; for as he sees your course, he foresees your end.

Nor is this the only lesson which lays on the surface of the text. Still speaking after the manner of men, I beg you to observe, that the Lord addresses words of poignant regret over the prize the sinner has lost, as well as the penalty he has incurred. So did Jesus Christ look upon Jerusalem. Musing on the desolation to which she should shortly come, he reflected on the preservation in which she might have safely stood. Just as little chickens cluster under the hen's wings, nestling there in genial warmth and peaceful security, so might Israel have found prosperity in her own borders, and protection against foreign invaders under the shadow of the wings of the Lord God Almighty. Ye remember how he burst into tears; ye can never forget that cry of his, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Such, too, are the words

of my text — words which I pray God may rouse your thoughts, and be graven deeply on your hearts. God looks upon the “peace” you might enjoy, and the “righteousness” that would enrich you, did you hearken to his commandments, and obey his great mandate, “Believe and live.” He espies you afar off from peace; he beholds what you cannot yet discern, the clouds gathering round your head. It may be you feel in a dead calm. He utters this pathetic exclamation, “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been like a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.”

Sinner! the eternal God weeps over you while you are utterly careless about yourself. The infinite heart of my divine Master yearns over you. The voice which has often reproved you, now mourns your hapless state in plaintive tones. Methinks I hear the chords of his heart in notes of pity, far exceeding all that prophets, apostles, and ministers could ever utter. “O that that sinner would believe in Jesus! O that he would give me his heart! O that he would be obedient to my word! Then his peace should flow in purity and fertility like a river; and then his righteousness should roll in boundless plenty, and multiply its grand impressive witness like the waves of the sea.”

And now, instead of giving you the order of my sermon, let me speak straight on. How great is the grace which the sinner despises! He cannot tell the loss he suffers. And what sweet figures these are by which God hath been pleased to set that grace forth! Gladly would I woo you by their charms. But oh! how terrible the consequences of neglect. May God enable me to sound the warning faithfully in your ears this night.

What loss thinkest thou is that which God bewails on thy account? It is not for thee, O sinner, to understand, or to appreciate such blessings as thou hast never known or possessed. We strive in vain to describe the blessing of sight to him who was born blind, or the sweetness of melody to the deaf. “Peace like a river,” and “righteousness like the waves of the sea,” are not within the limits of thy comprehension.

Be it so, then; there is a privation which you unconsciously suffer. You are a stranger to peace. “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” David Hume used to say that Christians were melancholy people. But that was a happy retort, in which somebody observed” David Hume’s opinion is not worth much, for he never saw many Christians; and when he did see any, there was enough to make them miserable in the sight of David



Hume.” The true Christian has a peace which is totally unknown to any other man; yea, he hath “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.” There are indeed two kinds of peace into the secret satisfaction of which no unconverted person can enter — peace with God, and peace in the heart. Yet both of these are the inalienable right of the believer; for the peace which our Lord Jesus Christ made by the blood of his cross has sealed his acceptance with the Father; and the peace which is produced in his conscience as the fruit of the Spirit calms the troubled passions of his breast. He enjoys peace with God. Happy soul! He says of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.” The terrors of the Lord do not make him afraid. When he walks in the midst of God’s works, this is his joy —

*“My Father made them all.”*

When he is on the deep and hoary sea, he says, “The deep is in the hollow of my Father’s hand, and were I to sink beneath its surging billows, I could only drop on to his bare arm.” When the thunder is abroad, and the lightning-flashes dart across the jet-black sky, he trembles not, his lips do not grow pale, nor is his face all blanched with fear: they are but his Father’s servants that do his pleasure, why should he be alarmed? Let sickness of body, or sorrow of mind, or any providence however calamitous come upon him, he bears it all with an equanimity which faith alone can beget, because God hath done it. He has perfect peace with God which the tribulations of the world cannot disturb. Between my soul and my God, if I be a believer, there is no breach. Nay, there is friendship, love, union. The bonds which bind me to him are the bonds of his own immutability, and his covenant love. This peace of God must transcend the strife of the elements which surround me, for

*“The hand that may ruffle the evening’s calm,  
Bears Calvary’s print on its bleeding palm.”*

So, too, the Christian is at peace with himself. Self is an ugly enemy for a sinner to encounter. It is written in the Bible, “And David’s heart smote him.” Conscience strikes hard blows. A good conscience hath a keen edge, and severely cuts those who tamper with it. Bad men are sometimes afraid of evil spirits. We have heard of people shutting their doors to keep the devil out of their houses. But so long as the thing called “Conscience” dwells in their breast, they will never be able to shut out a troublesome spirit. He carries a demon with him who has an unsatisfied conscience. Tell

me not of the howling of the wolf, when, in the depths of winter, meagre, gaunt, and grim, it gets a smell of blood, and speeds on in its ravenous career: conscience is infinitely more insatiable; the deep baying of the hounds of conscience is more terrible to a man than any sound except the voice of God. But the Christian is not afraid of himself. He can sit with himself in the hours of midnight, walk with himself in the lonely road, and talk with himself in the still calm of his meditations: God hath enabled him to shake hands with his conscience, and they have become the best of friends.

*“Oh, lost to virtue, lost to manly thought,  
Lost to the noble sallies of the soul,  
Who think it solitude to be alone.  
Our reason, guardian angel, and our God,  
Then nearest these when others most remote,  
And soon all shall be remote but these.”*

This is a peace which no man can attain unto except the man who hearkens to the commandment, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;” but if you hearken to that commandment and believe in the Son of God, you shall have peace and that peace shall be like a river.

The metaphor is full of beauty, and not wanting in instructiveness either, by which peace is compared to a river. What does this mean? I think it may suggest several things. Peace like a river, for continuance. Look at it, rising as a little brook among the shingles of that green hill, it comes dashing down a rugged cataract; it flows along that valley yonder, where the red deer wanders, and where the child loves to play; it turns the village mill; hearken to its babblings as it flows onward, sometimes leaping adown the wheel, and at other times flinging carelessly its strength to the winds. Now it becomes broad and deep, and many a large and heavy craft floateth upon it. Then it swells its bosom, bridges with noble arches span it, and anon it becomes an estuary, like a great arm of the sea, and pours its torrents into old father Ocean. It continues; it is not a thing of to-day which is gone tomorrow, but it proclaims its own constancy.

*“Men may come, and men may go,  
But I flow on for ever.”*

For ever, throughout all generations, the river speedeth to its destined place. Such is the peace of the Christian. He is always at peace. He has not peace like a swollen torrent which is dried up under some hot sun of

adversity, but his peace is with him at all times. Do you enquire for the Thames? You shall find it flowing in its own bed in the thick black night, as well as in the clear bright day. You shall discover the Thames when it mirrors the stars or sends back the sheen of the moon, as well as when multitudes of eyes gaze upon it at midday. You shall see the Thames in the hour of tempest by the lightning's flash, as well as in the day of calm when the sun shineth brightly on it. Ever is it there. And such is the Christian's peace. Come night, come day, come sickness, come health, come what will, this peace which passeth all understanding will keep the Christian's heart and mind, through Jesus Christ. Like a river it always flows on: no matter what the scenery on its banks, it does not stop. Here is a hill, and there a dale, here the dry and thirsty sand, and there, again, the fat and laughing fields, but the river is still the same. And so with the Christian. Today he abounds: to-morrow he is empty. One day he walks with manly stride, erect in health: another day he pines and tosses upon the bed of pain. To-day, men praise him, and every man extols him in song: tomorrow he is the butt of ridicule, and the subject of caricature, pointed at in the streets, and despised. To-day he lives: to-morrow he dies. But his peace is still the same. Like a river, no matter what the banks which overlook it, or what the weather which overcasts it, still it is the same; such is the deep calm which pervades the Christian's spirit. It is a continual thing, a peace with which the world cannot endow, a peace of which the world cannot deprive, but a peace still unto which the Christian is called, and it abideth with him evermore. Since the day I learned to wear in my button-hole the Heart's-ease plucked from God's garden, my soul can laugh all men to scorn who find comfort elsewhere.

And this peace is "peace like a river" for freshness too. The water which runs down the Thames, say at Maidenhead, never was there before. It is fresh water, fresh from the hills to-day, and to-morrow it is the same, and the same the next day — ever fresh supplies from the heart of old England, to keep her glorious river swelling and abounding. Now the peace which a Christian has, is always fresh, always receiving fresh supplies. We found peace at first through the precious blood of Christ. We have sinned since then, but we have gone anew to the fountain, and have washed again and again. We have had doubts and fears; these at first were dispersed by a sight of Christ: we have fresh views of our glorious Savior and his completed work, and so the river goes on receiving fresh supplies. The Spirit of God was our Comforter ten years ago. Ah! greyheaded man, he

was your Comforter, perhaps, before I was born. Ere this babbling tongue had touched any man's conscience, thou hadst rested on the cross of Christ, and the Spirit had said, "Peace be unto thee." The whole of these forty years thou hast had fresh anointings, fresh unction from on high, and so thy continued peace has been like a river. Do not suppose, O ye who are strangers to these things, do not suppose that the Christian gets a peace like the striking of a match, which goes out in a moment. Oh! no; it is the steady shining of a fixed star; not the blaze of a meteor in an autumn evening, but the shining of an empyrean lamp which never goeth out and never goeth down. Happy that Christian who has fresh floods of peace, peace like a river for the freshness of its streams.

And you know, brethren, that a river increases in breadth, and its waters augment their volume. You can leap across the Thames, say at Cricklade, or Lechlade; it is so tiny a little brook, you may almost take it up in a cup. There is a narrow plank across which laughing village girls go tripping over; but who thinks of laying down a plank across the Thames at Southend, or at Grays? Who would imagine that at Gravesend it might be crossed by the tripping girls, or by the skipping lambs? No, the river has grown — how deep! At the mouth of it, I suppose, comparable to the sea — how broad! It is a sort of ocean in miniature. There go the ships, and that leviathan might play therein. Not behemoth himself, methinks, would have the presumption to suppose that he could sniff up this Jordan at a draught, for it has grown too great for him. Such is the Christian's peace. Pure and perfect though it is at the first, little temptations seem to mar it; oftentimes the troubles of this life threaten to choke it. Not that they ever do.

***"Men may come, and men may go,  
But it flows on for ever."***

True, it seems little at the point of its rise. But be not deceived. Wait. When the Christian is ten years older, and has meandered a few more miles along the tortuous course of a gracious experience, his peace will be like a broad river. Wait twenty or thirty years, till he has traversed these rich lowlands of fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and conformity to his death, then his peace will be like a deep river, for he shall know the peace of God which passeth all understanding; and he will have cast all his care upon God, who careth for him. Thus that peace will go on increasing till it melts into the Infinite peace of the beatific vision, where

*“Not a wave of trouble rolls  
Across the peaceful breast.”*

Well, therefore, may our peace be likened to a river for its perpetual increase.

Yet once more, the peace of the Christian is like a river, because of its joyful independence of man. We have heard the story of a simpleton who went to see the reputed source of the Thames, and putting his hand over the little rivulet that came trickling down the ditch, he stopped it, and said, “I wonder what they are doing at London Bridge now that I have stopped the river.” His idea was, that as he had stopped its flow, all the barges were high and dry, the steamers breaking their backs on the sandbanks, and nobody knowing what consequences might ensue, because he had stopped the Thames. But who knew the difference? A child takes into its hand its cup of water, and blows it, and the whole surface undulates with little waves; but where are the giant-lips which could blow the Thames, and cause waves upon its bosom? Steadily, pleasantly, laughingly, the river flows on, gliding beneath the majestic castle of monarchs, and sporting past the bowers of the muses, careless altogether what men of might do, or men of intellect think. A whole Parliament could not make the Thames swell with waves, and fifty Parliaments could not lessen the body of its waters. It were well, by the way, if they could preserve its streams from the pollution of those foul and putrid sewers constantly emptied into it. The rivers would be better without the interference of men. Such, then, is the Christian’s peace. I have watched this river as it broke over the stones of adversity; and when the tide of earthly comfort ran low, it hath seemed as if the flow of peace were clearer and more transparent than ever. Some of you may have said, “I wonder whether such a brother or sister will be as peaceful when he is lying on his sick bed, as he used to be when he joined our Sabbath services.” You go, and you find his peace abounds in the hour of need. Perhaps you hardly expected that another dear friend could bear the loss of his situation, and thus come down, as it were, in the world; but to your amazement, he tells you how he is just beginning to learn Habakkuk’s song: “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

The devil cannot rob us of the peace which comes from God, neither can the world take it away. O Christian, what a comfort it is for you to think that if all the powers of darkness should be in arms against you, they cannot destroy your peace which is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Only let God be with you, and your peace of mind would still be like a river. It would still be like a sea of glass, which is not to be ruffled at all. Glorious in deed and in truth is the Christian's independence. Some Christians call themselves "Independents." I believe we are all very dependent upon God, and therefore we shall never be Independents in that respect; but, at the same time, every Christian is so entirely independent of man when he leans upon his God, that we may every one of us be Independents. We can afford to defy the world to do its best or its worst to stay the tide of our joy, when he causes our peace to flow like a river.

What would some of you give to have such a peace as this — that you could go to bed with peace and not be afraid of sleeping your last, and wake up with peace fearing no ill; that you could go to business not afraid of evil tidings, because your heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord? What would you give to have a great lump of sunshine put into your bosom, which you might break up and sprinkle over all your days and nights? Yet such peace you shall have if you hearken to God's commands. That you have it not is our regret to-night. Alas! alas! for you, that you have not listened to his commandment, which is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" for if you had hearkened to it, then the blessing would be yours, and the sweet enjoyment thereof would tranquilize your minds while it caused a tide of pleasure to stir up every grateful emotion of your heart.

Time flies; and I am still lingering upon the former of the two figures employed. I must pass on to notice the other figure which is used to express those good things which the sinner has missed: "THY RIGHTEOUSNESS AS THE WAVES OF THE SEA!"

Let us pause a moment, and notice how this metaphor surpasses the previous one in dignity, if not in delicacy. Now we can all see a sort of comparison, and yet at the same time a strong contrast between the water of an inland river, and the collection of waters which make up the wide expanse of the sea. One for the most part is tranquil, the other always heaving and surging to and fro. So I suppose, as the words were originally addressed to the Jewish nation and referred to their temporal welfare, the

river would represent the beauty and happiness of their own land, like the garden of Eden, watered by the river of God's pleasure; and the sea, with its waves rolling in majestically one after another in unbroken succession, would set forth that progress which is the renown of righteousness. Generation after generation would witness the rising tide of prosperity. Each chapter of their chronicles would lift its crested plume and tell of mighty acts and righteous deeds, till like the roar of ocean, the righteousness of Israel should proclaim the name of the Lord from the river even to the ends of the earth. Oh! what did that rebellious seed of Jacob lose by forsaking the Lord! This seems to me to be something like the meaning. But I want to apply this metaphor of the waves of the sea, like I have that of the flowing of the river, to the happiness of the believer. Look, dear friends, at this precious doctrine of the gospel through the glass of that Old-Testament symbol. The man who believes in Jesus Christ has the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, that is to say, the obedience of Christ is considered by God as his obedience. So, if I believe in Christ, I am as much beloved and as much accepted as if I had been perfect in a rectitude of my own; for the righteousness of Christ becomes mine. But how is this righteousness like the waves of the sea?

Well, first, it is like the waves of the sea for multitude. You cannot count the waves of the sea, do what you will; and so is it with the righteousness of Christ, you cannot count its different forms and fashions. Let us tell you of some of these waves. I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity, but Christ is called "that holy thing" which is born of the Virgin, and the holiness of Christ's birth takes away the unholiness of my nativity. I have committed sins in my childhood, sins against my parents; but Jesus Christ was a child full of the Spirit, and grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favor both with God and man; so Christ's childish perfection is imputed to me, and hides my childish sins. I have to mourn over sins of thought, because the imaginations and thoughts of my heart are evil; but Christ can say, "Thy law is my delight," and the thoughts of Christ's mind cover my thoughts. Sins of the tongue you have all had to lament; but grace is poured into his lips, and the graciousness of Christ's speech covers the gracelessness of yours. You have had heart-sins; but Christ has had heart-virtues. Your heart is hard; but he could say, "Reproach hath broken my heart." Your heart was cold; but his fervor was constant, till he could say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Your heart was proud, high, and lofty, but Christ was humble and meek; he endured shame and spitting. You have

had sins in worship; but Christ purged the temple, and served the Father in perfection, ay, both in Spirit and in truth. We have sins in private prayer; but the cold mountain-tops witnessed the fervor of his supplications. We have sinned against our fellow men; but he loved his neighbor better than himself. We have many sins against God; but he loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and it was his delight to do his Father's business. Keep on, brethren, keep on; let the list of your sins be long, but the list of Christ's righteousness will be longer still, for it is like the waves of the sea. What are you — a servant? Well, if you have the sins of a servant, Christ has the virtues of a servant. Are you a master? Your sins as a master are covered by Christ's righteousness as a master. I am a minister; I feel my imperfection; but my Lord was a perfect shepherd of the flock; as he was a perfect teacher, the perfection of his teachership belongs to me, and I am covered with it. Oh! what a righteousness is this! It is like the waves of the sea, manifold. All that the Christian can want to satisfy the claims of the divine law, is found in the righteousness of Christ. There is a moral grandeur in the picture here — "Righteousness like the waves of the sea."

The righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ is also like the waves of the sea for majesty. What an illustration of overwhelming power! There comes the rushing wave; the tide has determined to rise to such-and-such a point, who can keep it back?

And ask now, beloved, "Who can withstand the power of Christ's righteousness? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Whom Christ hath justified, who shall condemn?" Rise, mighty tide of righteousness, rise on, for none can stay thee in thy course. Then it is majestic, because it is profound. Who can plumb the depth of the righteousness of Christ? — deep as the demands of the law, deep as the miseries of hell, deep as the thoughts of God. It is majestic, too, because of its ceaseless energy. Sit in the boat, and see the waves as they go rolling by, following each other in endless succession. Never will the sea stop — it boileth like a pot. Now, the righteousness of Christ has a ceaseless energy. Wave upon wave, it breaks upon the eternal shore of divine justice, fulfilling the counsels of God, while it covers all the sins of his people. Beloved, that righteousness pleads tonight for every sinner who is resting on it, and it brings to you and to me the countless mercies which we are privileged to enjoy. For majesty, then, the righteousness of Christ is like the waves of the sea.



And the analogy may be traced still further, if you reflect on the sufficiency of the one and the other. All over the world, at low water, you will find certain muddy creeks, bays, and coves. How are all these to be covered? How will that swamp once more be made to look like a sea-bed? Who can do it? God can; and there is water enough in the sea to cover every cove and creek; and there is not a river which will have to say "We had no tide to-day."

O careless hearer, what shall I say unto thee to commend this righteousness of Christ? You may be the vilest sinner out of hell, but there is enough righteousness in Christ to cover you. For every creek of sin, for every bay of blasphemy, for every cove of infamy, here is a flood which will cover them all. The high-water mark of complete salvation shall be gained by every child of God. You cannot measure the all-sufficiency of the wave of the sea, much less can you find a gauge by which to estimate the all-sufficiency of the merit of Christ.

Only once more, to make four points here, as we did in interpreting the river. The righteousness of Christ is like the waves of the sea for origin. Who is the father of those waves? Out of whose womb came that mighty company? Who is the joyous sire to whom these children may lift up their voices and say, "Here we are"? "God," let the torrents roar; "He hath made us, and not we ourselves. The holy hands of God poured us into the channels which he had digged, and here we are, sometimes as a glass, that he may mirror his awful face in tempest, but ever his willing servants and his obedient sons." Now, the righteousness of Christ comes not from man. No one adds a jot or tittle to it, but it is of the Lord, and the Lord alone. Jehovah-tsidkenu bared his mighty arm and stretched it to the work, and with him there was no man, When he wrought out the salvation of his people, he stood alone without a helper.

"O" says one, "I wish I had that righteousness to cover all my sins, and to waft me to heaven!" If you had hearkened to God's commands, you would have had it. Yes, sinner, if you had believed in Christ, your peace would have been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea. That you have it not is owing to this, that you have not hearkened to God.

I will put it to you very affectionately, but with the utmost faithfulness. When the gospel has been preached, have you listened attentively? Do you say, "Yes"? We will go farther, then; have you hearkened in solemn earnestness, desiring that the Word might be blessed to you? Have you

hearkened in prayerfulness, crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner?" "Have you hearkened with willingness, being willing to be obedient? Have you hearkened with resolve, determining to do what was commanded you? Have you hearkened with humility, feeling your own inability, and beseech him, the Lord to help you? Have you hearkened with all the powers of your mind, calling upon your entire being, and saying — "Now, Lord, here is my ear, speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth?" "O my friends, you have many of you listened to me, but you do not listen to my Master, and even my poor word goes in at one ear and out at the other. You will go chatting home tonight, and you will seek after your amusements to-morrow, and all that the Word might have done will be thrown away upon you. I know how some of you hear; it is always with procrastination. You mean to hear, but you do not give heed with a present anxiety. You do not hear as that clock would bid you; for every tick of it seems to say, "Now, now, NOW." Do any of you remember the loss of that vessel they called the "Central America?" I suppose some of you do. She was in a bad state, she had sprung a leak and was going down, and she hoisted a signal of distress. A ship came close to her, the captain of which asked, through the trumpet, "What is amiss? We are in bad repair, and are going down; lie by till morning," was the answer. But the captain on board the rescue-ship said, "Let me take your passengers on board now." "Lie by till morning! was the message which came back. Once again, the captain cried, "You had better let me take your passengers on board now." "Lie by till morning," was the hoarse reply which came through the tempest. About an hour and-a-half after, the lights were missing and though no sound was heard, she and all on board had gone down to the fathomless abyss. Do not say, sinner, "Lie by till morning!" For God's sake, do not say, "Lie by till morning!" To-night, even tonight, hear ye the voice of God! O that the Spirit of my God might come upon you and open your ears to hearken to his commandment, for "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." This is the commandment, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved:" "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To believe, as you know, is to trust. It is, as it were, to fall flat down upon Christ; to let him carry you to heaven; to put yourself out of your own hands into Christ's hands; to have done with saving yourself, and to believe that he who died upon the cross hath perfected your salvation. Trust him, and if you hearken to his commandment, then your peace shall be as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

The Lord grant that it may be so, for his name's sake. Amen.

# ZECHARIAH'S VISION OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST.

NO. 611

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 22ND, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him be said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by.” — Zechariah 3:1-5.

THE original intention of this vision was to foretell the revival of the Jewish state after its long depression through the Babylonish captivity. Joshua, the high-priest, with his tattered garments, must be looked upon as the type of the Jewish people in their deep distress. He was ministering before the Lord in worn and filthy garments, to show at once the sin of Israel and the poverty into which they had fallen; for so poor were they, that the service of God could not be conducted in suitable apparel, but the high-priest himself appeared before the altar in robes unfitted for his sacred work. The set time to favor Zion is according to the visions most near at hand; and Satan, the old adversary of the chosen race, bestirs himself to resist them, and turn away the favor of God from them; but that same angel of the covenant who led the people through the wilderness, and carried

them all the days of old, stands before the throne as their advocate, and at his request, Jehovah rebukes Satan, and begins to bless the people. Joshua, their representative, receives a change of raiment, in testimony that the people's sin is forgiven, and that God accepts their worship. The vision then sweeps on to the day of the Lord Jesus, and the heart of the prophet Zechariah is cheered by a sight of the whole land restored to its former peace and happiness, under the reign of the glorious one who is called "My servant, THE BRANCH."

While we have been interpreting the other visions of Zechariah, we have tried to derive present comfort and profit from them. We will endeavor to do so on this occasion. We may very properly take Joshua as a type of all the people of God, as they stand in their sense of sin and natural faultiness, subject to the accusations of Satan, but delivered by their ever gracious Lord; and the change of raiment as setting forth the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of the Savior's righteousness, which is the joy of all believers. Let us take each particular separately, and may God the Holy Spirit shed a sacred light upon the vision, and may we see in it more than Zechariah himself discovered; may we see Jehovah Jesus in all the glory of his love, manifesting himself to his chosen as he doth not unto the world.

## **I.** To begin, then, where the vision begins, with THE BELIEVER HIMSELF REPRESENTED BY JOSHUA.

The believer himself is described as a priest standing before the angel of the Lord. Let us mark this. He is a priest. Who are the priests? Certain sons of Korah, who take too much upon them, say, "We are the priests, we are the legitimate descendants of the apostles, and a mysterious power distills from our priestly hands." We reply to them, it is impossible that you should be descendants of the apostles and yet claim to possess priestly power, for the apostles never claimed any peculiar priesthood for themselves above other believers, but they spoke of their Brethren, the Christians of their age, as being on a par with themselves in the matter of priesthood. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5.) If then these pretenders to priesthood be priests in any special sense, they certainly are not descendants of the Apostles, for the Apostles claimed no priority of priesthood beyond the rest of their brethren, but said of all the saints, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." The fact is they are neither one nor the other — they are not descendants of the Apostles,

for they preach not the Apostles' gospel, and know not their spirit; nor have they any priestly office, unless it be that the old Babylonian harlot accepts them as her foster-children, and gives them a name and a place among those who partake in her abominations. Who are the priests? Why, every humble man and woman that knows the power of Jesus Christ in his own soul, to purge and cleanse him from dead works, is appointed to serve as a priest unto God. I say every humble man and every humble woman too, for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, but we are all one in him. We offer prayer unto God, knowing that it ascends to heaven like sweet odours before the throne; we offer praise, believing that "whoso offereth praise, glorifieth God." "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Jesus hath made us priests and kings unto God, and even here upon earth we exercise the priesthood of consecrated living and hallowed service, and hope to exercise it till the Lord shall come. When I see then Joshua the high priest, I do but see a picture of each and every child of God, who has been made nigh by the blood of Christ, and has been taught to minister in holy things, and enter into that which is within the veil.

But observe where this High Priest is, he is said to be "standing before the angel of the Lord," that is, standing to minister. This should be the perpetual position of every true believer. I have no business on the bed of sloth; I have no right to be wandering abroad after private business; I can claim no time which I may set apart to my own follies, or to my own aggrandisement. My true position as a Christian is to be always ministering to God, always standing before his altar. Do I hear you ask how this can be, with your farms and with your merchandise? Know ye not, brethren, that whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, ye may do it all to the glory of God. Understand ye not that every place is now God's temple, and that everywhere is God's altar, and that ye can as truly serve him in your daily callings as in the assemblies of the place of worship. You know not the true position of a Christian if you fancy that you are only priests on the Lord's-day, and only to minister before God when you stand in the congregation of the faithful. You are appointed priests like your Lord, for ever, and you are for ever to be offering the sacrifice. By day and by night should your hearts be going up to him. You should fall asleep with your Master's name upon your tongue, and when you awake you should say with the Psalmist, "I am still with thee." Happy Joshua! Notwithstanding the filthiness of his garments, he is to be commended because he keeps in

the position to which he is called, and like the servant whose ear was bored, he does not leave his master's house. Come you that profess to be God's people, if you have been negligent in the duties of your high calling, and if your hearts at this moment are going after vanity, pray God the Holy Spirit to put you into a proper state to perform the functions of your holy office, and now in the courts of the Lord's house, stand like Joshua, with your hearts prepared by the Lord of Hosts to minister before the Lord.

Yet, notice where it is that Joshua stands to minister; it is before the angel of Jehovah. You and I can never stand to minister before Moses, the mediator, under the law; much less before Jehovah himself, for even our God is a consuming fire. It is only through a mediator that we poor defiled ones can ever become priests unto God. Peradventure, some of God's people here may have forgotten this. You have been searching yourselves and trying your hearts as in the sight of God's law, and you feel very deeply that you are far behind what the glory of the God in the law would ask of you; and therefore you begin foolishly to mistrust your Father's love, and to think that your service before him will not speed. Beloved, it is ill serving God in the light of the law: but oh! how blessed is it to stand and minister before Christ and in Christ! Then, if I can bring him nothing but my tears, he will put them in his bottle, for he once wept; if I can bring him nothing but my groans and sighs, he will accept these as an acceptable sacrifice, for he once was broken in heart, and sighed heavily in spirit. Gracious God, I bless thee that I have not to present my sacrifice directly to thyself, else thou wouldst consume my sacrifice and me with the flames of thy wrath; but I present what I have before thy messenger, the angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus, and through him my prayers find acceptance wrapped up in his prayers; my praises become sweet as they are bound up with bundles of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, from Christ's own garden; then I myself, standing in him, am accepted in the Beloved; and all my poor, defiled, polluted works, though in themselves only objects of divine abhorrence, are so accepted and received, that God smelleth a sweet savor. He is content and I am blessed. See, then, the position of the Christian as a priest: he is to stand before the angel of the Lord.

Now read the next word in the light of your own experience- "Clothed," it is said, "with filthy garments." Did you ever feel this when you have come to serve God? Perhaps it is at evening prayer- there has been something amiss in the family during the day, and you know it — perhaps, as the head of the household, you have to conduct prayer, and you feel, "O God, I

cannot pray, I cannot pray as I would; I am thy priest in this house, I know, but how can I minister before thee, for I have filthy garments on?" Possibly your business kept you up very late last night; things are not going on as well as you wish in matters of trade, and you have come here distracted; and while sitting in the pew listening to God's people as they praise the Lord, you have thought, "Ah! I have my filthy garments on; I cannot pray to him, I cannot praise him as I would." I know what it is to come and preach to you sometimes, and to feel such an overwhelming sense of my own unworthiness, that, were it not Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel, I would not come on this platform again, for it is hard to feel that your garments are defiled even while endeavoring to be God's mouth to men. Perhaps this afternoon, when you are going into your Sunday-school class, you will feel much warmth of heart towards God, you will confess that you are not your own, but bought with a price, you will desire to live unto Him and honor him; but, oh, that dread impediment of conscious guilt, it will make you cry out, "How can I stand before Him who charged his angels with folly, and declares that the heavens are not pure in his sight? How can I hope to have a blessing on anything that I do, when I feel a heart of unbelief departing from the living God? How can I give a blessing to his saints, when I want a blessing myself? How shall I break the bread of Christ with unholy fingers, and pour out the wine into his cup with a sinful hand?" But stop, Christian, do not think of renouncing your priesthood; do not let a sense of unfitness keep you from your service. Stand where you are; for remember, you are standing in the only place where pollution can be washed away, you are standing before the angel of the covenant. It is before Christ that sin is to be confessed. Confess it anywhere else, your sorrow is not repentance but remorse. "What is remorse?" says one. Remorse is repentance made out of sight of Jesus; true repentance is sorrow of sin in the presence of Christ. Foul and filthy as you are, there is but one voice which can speak you clean. Go not away from that voice. There is but one hand which can touch you and make you pure; stand where that hand is close to you, and still, filthy as your garments are, shun not the face of your best, your only friend, but breathe out this prayer, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. Purge me, oh, purge me now, for thy love's sake."

**II.** Let us turn to another individual who figures in the group. We have, in the second place, AN ADVERSARY.



Satan stood before the angel to resist Joshua. Does not his opposition seem superfluous? Poor Joshua feels enough the filth upon his garments, without needing to have the devil to withstand him. And I, poor I, do often feel so much my own sinfulness, that it seems a work of supererogation on the devil's part, to lay accusations-conscience accuses enough without him. But yet, so cruel is he, that he avails himself of the times of the weakness of God's people, there and then to resist them. Observe what he is called. He is called Satan, which signifies an adversary. He is an adversary, and that by nature. His nature is now so vile that he cannot help being the adversary of everything that is good. From the day on which he was expelled from heaven, and dragged with him a third part of the stars of glory, he has been God's bitterest foe; and as to man, from the hour in which it was said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," he discovered in that humble creature man, his great destroyer, and he has never ceased to nibble at the heel of the seed of the woman, foreknowing how terribly his head is to be bruised. There is something, however, very comforting in the thought that he is an adversary: I would sooner have him for an adversary than for a friend. O my soul, it were dread work with thee if Satan were a friend of thine, for then with him thou must for ever dwell in darkness and in the deeps, shut out from the friendship of God; but to have Satan for an adversary is a comfortable omen, for it looks as if God were our friend, and so far let us be comforted in this matter. Yet, remember, Satan is an adversary not to be despised. Of keen intellect, ripened by years of experience, with a fullness of cunning and craft which made even the serpent, when possessed by him, more subtle than any other beast of the field, he is an antagonist worthy of angelic might. Gabriel might quail in such a conflict if he did not stand clad in the golden armor of perfect innocence. We, so apt to sin, carrying about with us so much tinder, had need to fear the fiery sparks which he scatters. It is a dreadful thing to stand foot to foot with Apollyon. Read Bunyan's description of Christian's fight in the Valley of Humiliation, and you have there a shadow-picture of what the true conflict is. Better to endure all kinds of temporal pains and trials, than to be beset by Satan. He who wins gains nothing, and he who fails will find his weight full heavy when the dragon sets his foot upon his neck. Thou hast a stern adversary here, and one who will never cease to vex thee till thou shalt be out of gunshot of him, in having crossed the river of death.

Now you will perceive, if you look at the passage, that this adversary selected a most fitting place in which to do Joshua damage. He came to accuse him before the angel — before God's own Son. Oh! if he could once make the Lord loose his hold of us, then we should soon be his prey. You perceive he does not attack Joshua first, but he comes before the angel to prevent Joshua's being accepted. If Satan can once persuade you or me to think we are not God's children and not accepted, he knows that he has done us serious injury. In the arsenals of hell there are great stores of "ifs:" "its" are Satan's bomb-shells — "If thou be the Son of God." If he can make you doubt, then he makes a breach in your wall. If you be strong enough to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him," you will then come off more than conqueror. But the drift of Satan is to touch you just there, in that place where your strength lieth. He is like Delilah; he feels that if he can cut off the locks of your faith, where your strength dwells, then he may put out your eyes and sell you to the Philistines for ever. Take care, take care, when Satan comes to accuse you before the angel and to make you doubt your interest in the Lord Jesus, that you at once leave the case in the angel's hands, for your advocate can plead better against the accuser than you can, and it is best for you to hold your peace, and to let that great Advocate stand up, and to say, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee."

You will agree with me that the adversary not only selected a very fit place by coming at once to the throne to lay the accusation, but a very fit opportunity. Joshua had his filthy garments on. Satan is a great coward: he will generally meddle with God's people when they are down. I find that when I am in good physical health, I am not often tempted of Satan to despondency or doubt; but whenever I get depressed in spirit, or the liver is out of order, or the head aches, then comes the hissing serpent, "God has forsaken you, you are no child of God, you are unfaithful to your Master, yea have no part in the blood of sprinkling," and such-like things. You old rascal! if you say as much as that to me in my days of health, when my blood is leaping in my veins, I shall be more than a match for you; but to meet me just then, when you understand that I am weak, ay! this is like you, Satan. What a thorough devil our enemy is! I can call him by no worse name than his own; but if worse there were, richly would he deserve it. You must expect, Christian, when you have lost your sense of justification, when you are conscious of sin, when you feel unfit to minister

before God, you must expect that just then he will come to accuse you. If Joshua's garment had been perfectly clean that morning when he went to minister as a priest, Satan would have let him alone. but see Joshua depressed in spirit, and heavy in mind, weeping over his sins, then comes Satan, and he says, "Now, I shall speed with him, God will hate Joshua, for he cannot bear filth; he will be sure to cast away the filthy priest. And Joshua is hating himself too, and so I shall plunge him in despair, and make an end of the man." Surely, so it would have been if the angel had not been there; but the angel of the Lord, by his presence, is ever a wall of fire round about his people, and a glory in the midst. If the lion of hell comes prowling forth to seize the very weakest lamb, the great Shepherd will deliver the lamb out of his teeth; nor shall the infernal lion rend the meanest of his sheep.

Commentators have puzzled themselves to know what Satan would have to say against Joshua. As I read their conjectures, I thought that it would never have puzzled me, for my question would be in my own case, which out of fifty thousand things the devil would choose to bring? Not what he could bring, but I say, which out of fifty thousand things he would choose to bring? Truly, dear friend, if Satan wants to accuse us, any page of our history, any hour of any day will furnish him material for his charges. Yesterday you were impatient, the day before you were proud, another day you were slothful, on another, angry. Oh, what a den of unclean birds the human heart is! I would God we could wring their necks, but they are too many for any power less than divine to destroy them all; one chirps at one time and one at another, and between them they maintain a dolorous discord. Talk of perfection in the flesh! the man who dreams of it is either a fool or a knave, one of the two; he is either a fool and does not know his own heart, or else he is a knave before God, and is dishonest, and does not call that sin which is sin. Perfection in the flesh! why, those believers who live nearest to God and have the deepest experience of divine things will tell you they have given up that dream long ago, they never expect to be perfect except in Christ Jesus, and never to be complete in themselves but only to be complete in him. If the old accuser wants reasons for accusation he may indeed find as many as he wills, and continue to accuse as long as ever he pleases, for we are altogether as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. I have heard of a certain divine that he used always to carry about with him a little book. This little book had only three leaves in it, and truth to tell there was not a single word in the book.

The first was a sheet of black paper, black as jet; the next was a sheet of red-scarlet; and the next was a sheet of white without spot. Day by day he used to take out this little book, and at last he told some one the secret of what it meant. He said, "There is the black leaf — that is my sin, and the wrath of God which my sin deserves; I look, and look, and think it is not black enough, though it is black as black can be. Then the next, that is the leaf of the atoning sacrifice, the precious blood — the red leaf — how I do delight to look at that, and look, and look again. Then there is the white leaf, that is my soul, as it is washed in Jesus' blood, made white as snow, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and washing in the fountain which Christ has filled from his own veins." Ah, that first black leaf! That black leaf! Surely, if Satan looks over it, it will be no puzzle to him to find somewhat against you, for he may continue to plead against you till doomsday, and always find ground in your shortcoming for accusing you before the angel of God.

And what was it that Satan was after, after all, with Joshua? Was it that he hated Joshua's sins? Did he bring these before the angel because he really was vexed that such a sinner as Joshua should defile the courts of God's house? Ah, not a bit of it. It is an edifying spectacle, certainly, to see Satan pleading against sin. It is sometimes good to turn the tables on Satan, as Martin Luther does, and tell him, "Supposing I am all thou sayest I am, yet what are you that you should bring accusations against me? I am no servant of thine, Satan. If my Master does not find fault with me, who am I that I should be afraid, because you assail and accuse me? What are you, after all? You do but look round my castle wall, and smile at every rift, and so tell me where it wants mending! What are you, but a fierce dog, keeping me awake by your howling? Better that I have you than be without you, lest I fall into a deadly slumber, and so sleep myself into carnal security and spiritual death. What art thou after all, arch fiend, but one who, like a terrible tempest, drives me nearer to my Savior, compels me to find a harbour in his bosom." Satan aims at our destruction; that is the point at which he drives. He does not care for our pleasure, it is our total and eternal ruin. Let us know this, and never be beguiled by him. In whatever way he puts sin, let us understand it to be sin still, and therefore keep out of his clutches. When at the council of Basle, a certain cardinal had spoken very fairly about Protestants, the Emperor Sigismund rose and said, "Yes, he talks very prettily, but remember he is a Roman, he is a Roman still." So when the adversary advances with his blandishments and temptations,

remember he is a devil still, though drest in his best robes, and detect him always under any of his various subterfuges; for his desire is at all times and all seasons, your total destruction.

We have now, a very gloomy picture before us. We have the poor believer in Christ willing to minister unto the Lord, but quite unable to do so because of his filthy garments; and we have at the same time a clamorous accuser who is crying out before the bar of justice “Condemn him! condemn him! condemn him!” and well may that poor believer tremble from head to foot as he recollects how true the charge is.

**III.** But stop, the picture changes now, for THE ANGEL SPEAKS; he has been silent till now, but now he comes into the foreground. “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” Take note that this rebuke comes at the right season. When Satan accuses, Christ pleads. He does not wait till the case has gone against us and then express his regret, but he is always a very present help in time of trouble. He knows the heart of Satan, being omniscient God, and long before Satan can accuse he puts in the demurrer, the blessed plea on our behalf, and stays the action till he gives an answer which silences for ever every accusation. Do not think, Christian, that there will ever come a night so dark that there will be no light shining for you in it, or that Satan will be able to surprise the Savior and take you by storm. At the nick of time Christ will be sure to be your help.

Observe that this rebuke also came from the very highest authority. He says, “Jehovah rebuke thee, oh Satan.” Christ does not merely rebuke Satan himself, but he prays the Lord to do it. The eternal God, who is full of justice, says to the accuser, “I have justified, why dost thou accuse. I accepted my own dear Son in the room and place of the poor sinner with the filthy garments on; why dost thou accuse?” That is a joyous utterance of the apostle, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” If God justifieth, that very act is a rebuke to all the accusations of the false fiend. Courage, Christian! the voice which silenced thy cruel foe is the voice that rolls the stars along, against which nothing can stand.

You must not fail to observe, however, that this rebuke was founded upon electing love. You that deny the doctrine of election come here and read this verse: “Jehovah rebuke thee, old Satan; even Jehovah that hath chosen

Jerusalem, rebuke thee.” If God hath chosen his people, then it is of no use for Satan to attempt their overthrow. Christ does not here meet Satan with any “ifs” ands ‘buts,” and “peradventures,” he does not meet him with those truths which are merely matters of experience, and about which there may be a question, but he meets him with the high mysterious truth which was settled before the world was, he throws as it were this chain into his teeth, and bids him champ that till he breaks his teeth. “God hath chosen Jerusalem; “let that be rebuke enough. I think your experience will bear out what I now say, that it is all very well to live on spoon victuals, and on milk, when you have no trials and troubles; but if it ever comes to a pinch between your soul and sin, if you are in the deep waters of conscious sinfulness, and Satan is accusing you, nothing will do for your soul to meet the adversary with, but the doctrine of sovereign grace. You may be an Arminian in summer, but you must be a Calvinist in the roaring winds of winter. Arminianism is a very pretty sort of theology for a painted boat upon a glassy lake, but they that do business on deep waters, and weather the storms and hurricanes, must have a good substantial bark of everlasting immutable love; otherwise, if the vessel be not staunchly and well built, their tacklings are loose, they cannot well strengthen their mast, and the vessel drives upon the quicksands. Beloved, in my spiritual building I want to get more and more on to the rock, immediately on the rock. I know I am told that the rock does not yield a harvest, that election is not a practical truth; but after all, if I want a house built, let me have it on the rock, for if it does not yield me any present practical results, yet I must have some comfort, I must have some place to dwell in the storm. I can go out to other fields to sow my corn and reap my harvest, but for my everlasting confidence I want a rock.

Rest assured that the doctrines commonly called Calvinistic are the only doctrines that can shut the mouths of devils, and fill the mouths of saints in the day of famine and in the time of extremity. “The Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee.” When I am bowed down under sin, next to my Bible I love such books as “Elisha Coles on Divine Sovereignty,” or “Dr. Crisp’s Sermons.” Albeit that they do not contain all the truth, yet they teach very clearly that part of it which a troubled spirit needs. Does eternal love ordain sinners to eternal life irrespective of their works? Does the Lord absolutely, out of sovereign mercy, make men to be his children? Did God choose the chief of sinners, and does he never cast them away? Does he say, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy?” Does he declare

that he is absolutely justified in doing whatever he wills with his own? Does he on such terms as that choose me? Then blessed be his name, such an election as this just suits my case; and I find that believing the doctrine in that light, I can say to all my doubts and fears “Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee.”

The rebuke is forcibly applicable to the case in hand. He says, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire.” Satan says, “The man’s garments are filthy?” “Well,” says Jesus, “how do you expect them to be otherwise? When you pull a brand out of the fire, do you expect to find it milk-white or polished?” No, it had begun to crack and burn, and though you have plucked it out of the fire, it is in itself still black and charred. So it is with the child of God. What is he at the best? Till he is taken up to heaven, he is nothing but a brand plucked out of the fire. It is his daily moan that he is a sinner; but Christ accepts him as he is: and he shuts the devil’s mouth by telling him, “Thou sayest this man is black — of course he is: what did I think he was but that? He is a brand plucked out of the fire. I plucked him out of it. He was burning when he was in it: he is black now he is out of it. He was what I knew he would be; he is not what I mean to make him, but he is what I knew he would be. I have chosen him as a brand plucked out of the fire. What hast thou to say to that?” Do observe that this plea did not require a single word to be added to it from Joshua. If you look, Joshua did not say a solitary word. This so silenced the devil, that he was speechless. How often Satan has been nonplussed! He has made up a very pretty case against us; he has caught us in our worst moments and he has thought, “I will sift him like wheat in my sieve.” His plans would have succeeded, but there was a “but” in his way: (an unfortunate “but” for him, but a blessed “but” for us:) “But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Satan is something like Haman. What an admirable plot Haman had laid for the destruction of Mordecai and the Jews! Yes, but there was one little thing which he had not reckoned on—the Jews had a friend at court who lay in the bosom of the king. And so, Satan has often a scheme for the destruction of God’s people, but there is one thing which frustrates him, namely, that they have a dear friend at Court who lies in the bosom of the Eternal King, who pleads for them; and while he is there poor Joshua shall never fail, for the great Joshua, even Jesus his near kinsman, says, “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

#### **IV.** We have not yet entered into the soul of our text, but here it IS, A MATCHLESS DEED OF GRACE.

Thus said the angel, “take away the filthy garments from him.” Here is a picture of sin removed. Do you not think you see him; they have taken off his vestments, every single piece of the robe which was too defiled for him to wear has been taken away, and there he stands; and as the angel looks at him he sees the man’s nakedness, but he cannot see any defilement, for the filth is all gone. So is every pardoned sinner; so am I this morning; so are you, dear brother. God has commanded, “Take away his filthy garments from him,” and as easily as we take off filthy robes, so easily does God take away sin through the atonement of Christ. There is more than that here; the Lord doth not only take away the sin itself, but he takes away the consciousness of it. You feel as if you could not serve God because sin is heavy on you. Look to Jesus, the covenant angel. Hear him say “It is finished,” and if you can but lay hold on him, in a moment you will lose all sense of sin; you will know yourself to be a sinner, but at the same time you will feel that you are a blood-washed sinner, a sinner saved by grace, and your soul, with your Saviours garments on, made holy as the Holy One, will venture close to the throne and stand there unabashed. That is a delightful sentence where Paul speaks of “having our conscience purged from dead works;” not merely having the dead works forgiven, but having the conscience purged of them, so that you have no more conscience of sin. Sin is gone, you do not stand now in God’s sight as a sinner, but as one who is perfect in Christ Jesus; you have not a sin in God’s book against you, but you are absolved, Christ has said it, “Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee.” You have an admirable picture of this in Joshua’s losing his filthy garments.

Nor was this all. The order was now given to clothe him: “I will clothe thee with change of raiment.” Christ has performed a complete obedience to the divine law. He had no need to do this for himself, but he did it for his people. What he did is ours; the perfect obedience of Christ is imputed to every believer. We wrap ourselves about with the garments of Christ, just as Jacob put on the robes of his brother Esau; and our Father gives us the blessing, because he finds us in our brother’s clothes. Oh, this is gracious, for all the righteousness you and I could ever have if we had been perfect would only have been human, but this is divine; Christ is the Lord our Righteousness, and we are sumptuously arrayed in his seamless robe.



Here let me remark that this is matter of experience too, for the believer gets to feel that he can now minister before God without trembling, for he wears Christ's garments. Oh, how delightful it is to preach, dressed in the robes of Christ, or to pray when you feel you have Christ's vestments on! Oh, how fair a thing it is to minister at God's altar, when you know that you are dressed in the white linen, the righteousness of Christ, so clean that even God's all-seeing eye cannot detect so much as a spot or blemish in it. Pure, lovely, beautiful, without blemish from head to foot in the sight of God, is every justified soul. Oh, Christian, never be satisfied unless you know this, and live in the constant enjoyment of it.

Notice one more thing, and I will not keep you longer. The prophet was so astonished to see the alteration which had taken place in Joshua dressed out in his new and sumptuous apparel, that he broke in upon the vision, and spake himself, "And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head." I do not know what business Zechariah had to speak; but truly, if I had seen the vision, I must have done the same. Gazing through my tears, seeing the Lord's people thus transformed from filthiness to cleanliness, and from shame to beauty, I think I should have said, "Now, Lord, finish the work; make that servant of thine to serve thee; as he is perfectly clothed, now, Lord, put on the mitre, and make him fit to do thy work." Some of God's people appear to me to forget this. They get as far as imputed righteousness, and believe themselves to be accepted in the Beloved. There they are content to tarry. But, ah, my soul desires even to say, "Lord, set a fair mitre on the head of every one of thy saved ones." Some of you I do trust are saved, but then how little you do for Christ! My prayer shall be for you — "Lord, set the mitre on their heads; make them priests — they ought to be such; thou hast washed them, cleansed them, and clothed them, on purpose that they may be such: but they have laid aside their mitre — Lord, set it on their heads." I pray that you may have it on your head to-day; that you may in your family, in the Sunday-school, to-morrow in your business, in the street, and in the shop, go forth wearing the mitre, ordained to be true priests unto God, and exercising your functions, not laying aside your office. Some act with their mitres as our kings and queens do with their crowns: they only put them on upon state occasions — do not wear them always, because they are too heavy. Oh Christian, your state occasion should be always; — you are always dear to Christ, and always near the Father's heart. Never take your mitre off. Believers, put it on and go forth from this time forth praising and blessing the covenant angel who in

Jehovah's name has taken away your filthy garments, and who still stands by! I like that closing sentence, — "And the angel of the Lord stood by." Oh, yes, we want him always to stand by; when you have your new garments on, when you wear your mitre, you still want his presence. "Abide with us," must be our daily prayer. We want still his strength, his comfort, his smile, the help of his arm, the light of his countenance; for if we have him not, we shall soon slip from our steadfastness, and have reason to stand again, like Joshua, with filthy garments on.

I have thus preached after a very feeble sort to God's people. There is this voice to sinners. Your case is like that of Joshua; for you have filthy garments on. Do not try to wash them. Nothing is said here about washing the garments, not a word. Do not try to make those old rags any better — there is nothing said about stitching or mending. Just confess that they are too bad to be mended, too filthy to be washed, and turn your eye to Christ, the wounded sufferer, and pray him this morning to speak the word — "Take away his filthy garments from him, clothe him with a change of raiment." I tell thee, sinner, what he did for Joshua, he will do for you. Oh, seek his face and live! God help you to seek it, and to find it this very morning, and he shall have the praise for ever and ever. Amen.

# JESUS WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET.

NO. 612

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 29TH, 1865,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him,  
Lord, dost thou wash my feet?” — John 13:6.*

OUR Savior had so steadfastly set his face towards the awful sufferings of his passion, that when they actually approached he was not in the slightest degree disturbed or disconcerted. If you were perfectly aware that to-morrow morning, after a night of terrible agony, you would be led forth to a cruel and ignominious death, you would probably feel like men distracted with terrible apprehensions; or at any rate, if through grace you were able to be calm and peaceful, your mind would scarcely be in a fit state to minister consolation to others, or to conceive new methods of instruction for your friends. But behold your Lord and Master! It is eventide of the same night in which he was betrayed; he foreknows that the bloody sweat within an hour or two will crimson all his flesh; he is well aware that he who is eating bread with him will that night betray him; he foresees that he must feel the Roman scourge, and be the victim of Jewish slander; he knows right well that he must bear all the wrath of God on the behalf of his people; and yet he sits at supper, he feasts as if no unusual cloud were lowering; and when the supper is over, his inventive mind is fully at work with admirable plans of instruction for his disciples, and among the rest he takes off his upper garment, he wraps himself about the loins with a towel, he goes to them as they are reclining at full length around the table, and coming behind them he begins to wash the feet of first one and then another. What blessed calmness of mind! What hallowed serenity of spirit! O that our hearts were equally fixed on God in our days of trial and grief!

Without question we may go further, and take most solemn notice that there was in the near approach of death a joy in Jesus' heart into which no stranger could enter. Now was about to be accomplished that which he had longed for. Did he not say, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."

With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I die?" Did this account for his giving out a hymn of praise on that doleful night? for "after supper they sang a hymn." Did that account for his adding these remarkable words: "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him?" Did his joy in the prospect of what he was about to accomplish for his people swell to the very highest, just about the time when the fountains of the depths of his griefs were about to be broken up, and his spirit to be flooded in agony as he cried, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death?" O to know his joy — the joy of loving even unto death!

Let us come at once to the teaching of the Savior, and let it be surrounded with an unusual interest, because of the fact that it is his dying teaching. Let us see him as he girds himself with the towel, remembering that he was soon to be girt with the bands of death: let us see him, I say, with a more profound interest, because he is just upon the verge of these terrible depths where all the waves and billows of Jehovah's justice dashed over him. His sermon beginning, "Let not your heart be troubled," is his swan-song; these are the last drops of his life that he is now spending; at the supper-table you have the wine, which he keepeth until now. As we see him washing his disciples' feet, we shall discover choice love worthy of the last solemn hour of departure.

We shall take the text in four ways. First here is matter for enquiry" Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Secondly, here is matter for admiration — "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Thirdly, here is matter for gratitude. Fourthly, here is matter for imitation.

## **I. HERE IS MATTER FOR ENQUIRY.**

We know that the Savior washed the feet of Peter; but does he wash our feet also? We do not expect, of course, the literal transaction to take place; but is there anything in the conduct of Christ now analogous to his washing Peter's feet when on earth?

He has washed all believers, once for all, in his most precious blood. But of this we do not speak this morning. Cleansing, as before the bar of justice, is completely accomplished for ever for all the chosen by the great blood-shedding upon Calvary. That is a matter of the past — a thing for which to bless God to all eternity. “We are clean; through Jesus’ blood we are clean.” But here is another kind of washing — not of the entire man, but of the feet only; not with blood, but, with water; not in the fountain filled from the Savior’s veins, but in a basin filled with water. Does our Lord Jesus do anything of this kind now, anything so humbling to himself, and yet so needful for us? answer, yes, he does.

And, first, does not the Savior perform an action parallel with this, when he watches over the temporal affairs of his people? You know, beloved, that not a hair of your head falleth to the ground without his care; in all your afflictions he is afflicted, and as the angel of God’s presence he saves you and carries you. Your most trifling trouble may be taken in prayer to Christ, and spread before him with as much certainty of deliverance as when Hezekiah spread Sennacherib’s letter before the Lord, for Jesus waiteth to be gracious to his own beloved. In every transaction we should adore the providential care of our great Shepherd and Friend, for the government is upon his shoulder. Now, when Jesus thus superintends your mean affairs, looks to your family troubles, and bears your household cares, saying unto you, “Cast all your care on me, for I care for you,” is he not in effect doing for you what he did for Peter, washing your feet — for he is caring for your lowest part, and minding the poor dust-stained body? O king of glory! the stars would not make a crown worthy of thee; the tempest is but a poor chariot for thy glory, and the winds are but slow coursers to be harnessed to thy car; and yet dost thou stoop from all this greatness to observe man, who is less than a worm, to observe me, less than the least of all thy saints, and to care for me as a mother careth for her child? It is even so; he does do it; he does in this sense wash his people’s feet.

When Jesus Christ puts away from us day by day our daily infirmities and sins, does he not wash our feet? Last night, when you bowed the knee, you could not help confessing that there had been much in the week’s transactions which was not worthy of your standing and profession; and even to-night, when the engagements of this day are over, you will have to mourn that you foolishly committed the very sins which you repented of weeks ago, that you have fallen again into the very sloughs of folly and sin

from which special grace delivered you long ago; and yet Jesus Christ will have great patience with you; he will hear your confession of sin; he will say, "I will, be thou clean;" he will again apply the blood of sprinkling; he will speak peace to your conscience, and remove every spot. Oh, it is a great act of eternal love when Christ once for all absolves the sinner, takes him from under the dominion of the law, and puts him into the family of God; but what long suffering and patience there is when the Savior with much long-suffering bears the daily follies of the recipient of so much mercy, day by day, and hour by hour, putting away the constant sin of the erring but yet beloved child. To dry up a flood of sin is something marvellous, but to endure the constant dropping of daily sins—to bear with that constant weary trying of patience, this is divine indeed! To blot out the whole of sin like a thick cloud, this is a great and matchless power, as well as grace; but to remove the mist of every morning, and the damps of every night — oh! this is condescension; I would I could describe it; it is condescension well imaged in the washing of Peter's feet.

Consider again. Our poor prayers, which are very much the feet of our soul, since with them we climb to heaven, with them we run after God — our poor prayers always need washing. It is oftentimes easier, brethren, to do a thing over at once anew than it is to mend and patch up a work which has been badly done by others. Then what patience it must require in Christ's case, to take my poor, imperfect, and polluted prayers, and make them fit to be presented before his Father's face! There are his own prayers for me—I thank him for them, for they prevail; but I cannot help also blessing him that he should take my prayers, and put them into the censer, and offer them before his Father's face; for I am certain that before they can have been fit to offer they must have experienced a deal of washing. John tells us that he offers "the prayers of saints" — this is humbling himself indeed! Oh, how much of redundance must have been taken away from our petitions, when we have asked for what we ought not to have desired! How much of omission must have been made up, when we have forgotten to ask for the things which we most needed! How much of unbelief he must take out of our prayers! How much coldness, deadness of heart! How much formality, wandering of thought! O how much holy life and unction, holy faith and holy joy, must the dear Redeemer have infused into our supplications, before they can have been fit to come up before the ears of the Lord God of hosts! Yes, in patiently bearing with my prayers he does daily wash my feet.

Think yet again. Jesus makes our works acceptable. These may be compared to the soul's feet. It is by the feet that a man expresses his activity. The walk of a Christian — by this we mean the good works which the Christian performs for his Master. But look at our works; if Christ would simply throw all our good works into a heap, and let them rot, that would be the shortest way with them; if he would take our almsgivings, our preachings, our teachings of others, our prayers, and thoughts, and works all together, and just cast them into Tophet's fire, how dare we complain; but instead of that he is not unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labor of love, but counts that herein his Father is glorified that we bear much fruit. We remember to have heard of some one who made sugar out of old rags; but then it was found that the sugar cost more a great deal than the sugar was worth; the manufacture cost more than the goods were worth when produced: and judging from our point of view, this is something like our works. Jesus Christ makes sweetness out of the poor rags of our good works; surely I may say they cost him more in the manufacturing than ever the raw material could have been worth, or the finished works themselves are worth, except in his esteem. Could he not, if he pleased, convert men without our preaching? But he will not do it; he would rather that they should be brought in by our imperfect preaching and therefore be washes our preaching — he washes our feet. Could he not save sinners without you, my sister — without you, my brother? And yet he sets you longing after souls, and opens your mouth to speak a good word to them; and he accepts what you do. But oh! what condescension is there, what tenderness, what divine stooping from his loftiness, that he should cleanse your works! It is more than he ever did for angels. When an angel had defiled his service, he banished him from heaven; but with all the imperfection of our service, we expect that in Christ we shall be welcomed into heaven with the words "Well done, good and faithful servant."

If you want other instances of the familiar condescension of Christ, let me remind you of how patiently he is content to suffer in his people's sufferings. Not a pang shoots through that head of yours but Jesus knows and feels it; not a grief makes that bosom heave in which Christ is not a partaker. "I will make all their bed in their sickness." Oh! what a blessed text is that! As one old expositor says, "Not merely make their pillow, but their bolster and their bed, and make all their bed, where their feet lie, where their head lies; all, all of it. I will come, and I will have such sympathy with them in their entire grief, that from the beginning to the end

of it I will make them happy in the midst of grief through my divine consolations." "I will make all their bed in their sickness." Have you not had choice manifestations from Christ in your worst seasons, so exactly fitted to the peculiarity of your case, that you did not know which to admire most, the love which visited you, or the condescending care which so brought itself down to your case, and sat so down at your bedside, and put itself so entirely into your position, that it could feel as you felt, and speak to you just the words which your case required. The Lord Jesus loves his people so, that every day he is washing their feet. Their poorest action he accepts; their deepest sorrow he feels; their slenderest wish he bears, and their greatest sin he forgives. He is still their servant as well as their friend; still he takes the basin; still he wears the towel. It is not only majestic deeds that he performs, as, wearing the mitre on his brow, and the precious jewels glittering on his breastplate, he stands up to plead; but humbly, patiently, still like a servant he goes about among his people, washing his disciples' feet. I would to God I could speak worthily on such a theme as this; but it is true, as your experience must tell you, that "he remembereth our low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever."

Before I pass from this point, it is a matter of enquiry for some here — "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Some of you are not washed by Christ, for you live without thinking of him. "I never did any harm," says one, "that I know of." I will ask you another question — what did you ever do for Christ? Can you answer that? You must reply "I have done nothing for him whatever." Ah! then, if you have never been enabled to do anything for him, I fear it is because you have lived thoughtlessly, without a care for him; but, if he had ever washed your feet, you could not forget him; and little as it might be, yet you would have done something, and you would now be desiring to do more. Ah! my hearers, some of you are so far from ever having your feet washed daily, that you have never been washed at all. "There is a fountain filled with blood," but filled in vain, as far as you are concerned; there is a Savior, but you are unsaved; there is balm in Gilead, but you are not healed; there is a Physician there, but you are still sick; there is life in Christ, but you are dead; the brazen serpent is lifted up. but you are dying of the fiery serpent's bite. One look at Jesus will save, but that look you have not given; you are without God, without Christ, without hope, and "strangers from the commonwealth of Israel." May God the Holy Ghost visit you with his quickening power, and convince you of your sin this morning! May he make you feel uneasy till you find Christ!



May he give you a hungering and a thirsting after him that will never be satisfied till you clasp him in your arms and say "Christ is mine." I would to God that I had not to make this remark, but I must make it in faithfulness to your souls. You are obliged to answer, "No, no, no; the Lord Jesus has never washed my feet." But then send up the prayer, "Lord, do it; Lord, do it now for thy love's sake."

**II.** Our text is, in the second place, MATTER FOR ADMIRATION, and that, too, in several respects.

It is matter for admiration when we consider the freeness of the deed. "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" It is perfectly wonderful that he should, for we have scarcely desired the mercy. If you look the chapter through, you do not find that Peter asked Christ to do it. Peter was lying down: he had just been eating at the supper; he had no thought of Christ's washing his feet; there was not one of the twelve that ever dreamed of such a thing; and when the Lord began to wash the feet of one, the others did not say, "Lord, come and do the same to me." No, it was unsolicited, unexpected; he comes, without any prayers or supplications on their part, and he begins to wash their feet. Peter is surprised. It is great goodness on Christ's part to do what we ask him to do — to bear our prayers when we really feel our need; but does he perform for us such menial, such generous acts, as to wash our feet without being asked? Oh! beloved, if Christ did no more for us than we ask him to do, we should perish for ever; for nine out of ten of the things which he gives us we never asked for, and what if I were to say, that three out of four of them we scarcely know that we want? We do not know our own needs. We have a general view of our necessities, wholesale, as it were; but our daily needs, our daily wants, who among us can tell them! Christ's sufferings are said, according to the Greek Liturgy, to have had unknown depths — "thine unknown sufferings;" were not those unknown sufferings endured for our unknown sins, and to make a supply for our unknown wants, that we might have that multitude of mercies which we may style unknown mercies? We should not only bless God for the mercies which we have known, but for those which we have not known-for probably those make up the larger proportion. You that are Christians, some of you who have been believers in Christ ten or twenty years. Have there not been many nights on which you have gone to bed without any particular sense of guilt, and without any special intercession for peculiar cleansing? You have forgotten to ask for the cleansing, but he has never forgotten to give it, he has spontaneously washed your feet. You

have risen in the morning; you were not aware that any special danger would come to you, and you did not pray for special protection, but yet he knew it; and unasked and unsought for he has followed you, held the shield over you, and kept you from danger. He has washed your feet without your having desired it, or having known that he had done it. Let his name be praised for this. These unsought favors of unspeakable love, these perpetual mercies of unslumbering carefulness — let them wake us now to gratitude, and now may we exclaim with wonder, “Lord, is it so? Dost thou always continue thus to wash my feet?”

The next subject of wonder is the glory of the person. “Lord! King! Master! God! Everlasting! Eternal! Almighty! King of Kings, and Lord of Lords! Dost thou — dost THOU wash my feet? Thou callest the stars by their names, and they shine by thy light; Mazzaroth cometh forth in his season at thy bidding; thou guidest Arcturus with his sons! The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine; thou sittest upon the circle of the heavens, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers: thou holdest the waters in the hollow of thine hand, thou metest out heaven with thy span; Lord, dost thou wash my feet? When thou wast on earth thou didst tread the waters; the depths knew thee, and were like marble beneath thy feet; thou didst affright grim death himself, for Lazarus came forth at thy bidding from the shades of the grave; fevers knew thee; leprosy, paralysis, epilepsy — all diseases understood their Master’s voice, and fled at thy bidding; the winds were bushed at thy will; even the devils were subject unto thee; though thou wast veiled in manhood thy creatures perceived thy greatness; angels ministered unto thee, and the heavens were opened unto thee; and dost thou wash my feet? O my brethren meditate on this! It is far more a theme for thought than for speech. He whom the angels worship takes a towel and girds himself. Hark to the song, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory; all the earth doth worship thee, thou eternal Son of the Father.” “Lord, dost thou wash my feet?” Oh! think of this, ye spiritual men; think, till your hearts melt with love. No one else could cleanse us. The infinite God must take away the infinite blackness and filth of his people’s sin! What a stoop is here! Let us lift up our eyes and wonder; let us lift up our voices and praise his name, that he should ever wash our feet.

Change again the word. Observe the lowliness of the office. “Lord, dost thou wash my feet?” Here comes a traveler who has journeyed far; he is very weary; there is much dust upon his sandals, and his feet are stained

with travel. As soon as he treads the threshold of the hospitable house, a black slave, a servant, a hired servant, takes off his sandals, brings a basin, a pitcher full of water, and begins to pour the water upon his feet, having first unloosed the lachets of his shoes and taken them away. The host does not stoop to this office; it is not the part of a master to wash feet; it is servile, menial, humiliating work. Yet this, which was the lowest of all offices in the East, is that which the Savior undertakes, — not in fiction and metaphor, but in reality, for every one of us. “Lord, dost thou wash my feet? To wash my head, Lord, is very gracious; to purge my mind from evil thoughts is very loving; to wash my hands, to take my heart and make that clean is very condescending; but dost thou absolutely do a slave’s work, and wash my feet? Lord, wilt thou take the meanest part of me, and wash that? I know thou hast said, thou wilt sanctify my spirit and my soul — there is much there; but wilt thou sanctify my body too — my feet, the lowest part of the man, the meanest part? Art thou not content to leave spot or wrinkle upon me anywhere, and therefore dost thou humble thyself to the meanest, basest, lowest action of all, to wash my feet”? Truly, beloved, this is subject of wonder. And yet the wonder is excelled if you remember that he shared a slave’s death, as well as a slave’s life: a slave’s life — when he washed our feet; a slave’s death — when they sold him for thirty pieces of silver, and afterwards pierced his hands and his feet. I put this deed of love in contrast. Conceive him now in the highest heavens, with the keys of heaven and earth and hell swinging at his girdle, holding the silver scepter by which he governs all creation; can you conceive him, when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father? And yet he, that self-same one, comes down from the grandeur of heaven, and the splendor of infinite honor, and he washes, absolutely washes, in a slave’s garb and after a menial manner, the feet of his disciples! Oh, that we felt a tender admiration worthy of this miracle of love!

Once again, there is a note of wonder if you lay the stress upon the word my: “Lord, dost thou wash my feet?” Perhaps to some of you this will be the greatest marvel of all — the unworthiness of the object of this washing. “Dost thou wash my feet?” Thou hast favored me with more mercies than the most of men; thou hast overwhelmed me with thy bounties; and yet my heart is hard towards thee: I am often unbelieving, forgetful, slothful, careless; thou mightest well cast me away for ever; because of my ingratitude thou mightest well say, “Depart, I will have no more to do with

thee: I have had enough of patience; I cannot endure thine ill-manners! Yet dost thou, Lord, absolutely condescend to wash my feet? Herein thou hast displayed thyself more gloriously than ever; thy grace has out-graced itself." Thus would the preacher speak, and he thinks he hears you follow him. "Lord," you say, "I once cursed thee to thy face; there was a time when thy holy day was my best day of business; when thy house was a place which I abhorred; thy book was unread; my knee was never bent to thee; I boasted of my own righteousness, when I was a sinner black and filthy, — and dost thou wash my feet!!" I hear a sister, with peculiar tenderness, say, "O Jesus, I would fain wash thy feet with my tears, and wipe them with the hair of my head, for I have been a sinner; and dost thou wash my feet!!" I think I hear another say, "Lord, I once denied thee; I made a profession of thy faith, but in an evil hour I fell; I went into sin; I said, 'I know not the man! And dost thou wash my feet!'" I hear another say, "Lord, thou knowest my private sins, my secret vices; I dare not tell into the ear of my fellow-creature the faults into which I have fallen; I am only fit to be a faggot in hell-fire; there is nothing in me but what is damnable; I am altogether as an unclean thing; and dost thou wash my feet!" Oh, you that are the people of God, cannot you all find some special reason for wonder at this? There are some of you who are so poor that even some of your own Christian brethren are wicked enough to be half ashamed to own you; yet Jesus Christ washes your feet! your clothes would not sell for sixpence, and yet he washes your feet! You scarce have enough shoe-leather to keep your feet from the cold, and yet he washes them! You have been laughed at, and despised, and ridiculed, and yet you have Christ for your foot-washer! The moment your name is mentioned there are some ready at once to slander you and abuse you; yet so tenderly does Jesus love you, that he washes your foulest part. However, I must leave you to think — for I cannot talk — I must leave you to think on such a precious passage as this. Certainly the angels of heaven will never leave off wondering however it can be, that their King, their Prince, their Leader, could so humble himself as to become a servant of servants-to take the very meanest of his people, and declare that he will wash their feet, aye, and do it too.

One more subject for wonder. It is perfectly marvellous to remember, that Christ does so completely wash our feet. "Dost thou wash my feet, Lord, then there cannot be any filth on them. Dost thou wash my feet? Then they must be clean. It cannot be that thou couldst wash, and yet filth remain."

When things are washed by careless servants, they want washing again; but when they are washed by the loving hands of Jesus, washed by him who makes heaven and earth, surely they cannot be badly done. Come, then, you that feel you have been sinning the last week — you that are God's people, you that are resting on Christ, but have a sense of guilt upon your consciences, and cannot get rid of it, and are sighing and crying, do ask this question, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Then I will come to thee; I will come with my feet all filthy if there is such a bath as this to be washed in. If my sins be returned to me, and appear to remain upon my conscience, if thou waitest still to wash me from present guilt and present depravity, then here I am, — as at the first I came, I come again; nothing but thy merit do I rely upon; nothing but thy love is my confidence; I give myself up to thee; take me as I am, and wash me clean." I say it is a subject for admiration, how thoroughly clean Christ does wash his people, so that they can really cry, "There is no spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, even upon my feet; I shall be presented holy, unblamable and unreprouvable in the sight of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord."

**III.** Now we will turn from admiration to what may be more practical — to GRATITUDE; I hope already we feel that heaven-born flame glowing in our souls.

Here is matter for gratitude then. I heard the other day of a meeting for prayer, at which my dear brother Offord, who so marvellously made confession of sin at our great prayer-meeting in the first week of January, was moved to make another confession; and he did so in such a manner, that the whole assembly was moved, and there were audible sobs and cries from God's people while they confessed their transgressions. No sooner had he done so, than some brother, wise above what is written, rose in the assembly, and said he thanked God he could not join in the confession, his sins were all forgiven him, and therefore he had no sins to confess; he stood before God so accepted in Christ that he had no sins whatever to make confession of. His prayer went far to spoil the meeting, and to grieve the people of God. I do occasionally meet with erring brethren, who say, "I never make any confession of sin." "I have prayed for months," said one to me, "and I have never made any confession of sin, I believe all my sins are forgiven, and I have none to confess." Now, at the very first mention of this, do you not feel shocked? The holy sensibilities of a child of God suffer violence from the very thought of such absence of repentance. I should have been surprised if I did not hold myself prepared to hear any

monstrosity from persons tinctured with the gall of Plymouth Brethrenism. Concerning that sect, much as I love and respect many of its members, I dare not say less than this, that God alone knows what they will teach to-morrow, for they seem to be given up to the inventions of their own vainglorious minds, to concoct and devise delusions without number. They have one mark of the Babylon which they profess to abhor, for mystery is written on their very brow. I pray God to keep our young people from their company, for their professions and pretences are such as might, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. Gracious men I grant them to be, but as to doctrine, as mad as March hares, and as perverse as bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke. When I first heard this doctrine of not confessing sins, I was startled. I felt as if I could have no more communion with a man who could talk in that way. Go on your knees, and not confess sin? My dear friends, I hope to die with this upon my lips, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments," I hold that I shall be out of Christ altogether, when I reject repentance and confession. I know that my sins are forgiven me; there is no man in the world who preaches more than I do the doctrine that Christ has for ever made a full atonement for the sins of all his people; but as to not making a confession of sin, God forbid these lips should ever utter anything so ungospel-like, so un-Christlike!

Let us put this matter before you pretty plainly. It is quite certain that those whom Christ has washed in his precious blood need not make a confession of sin as before God the Judge, because they are no longer under God as a Judge; they are not ruled and governed upon the principle of law at all. Christ has for ever taken away all their sins in a legal sense, so that no one can bring anything to their charge, and they need not confess where there is no one to accuse. The blood of Jesus has set his people entirely away from the position of Prisoners under the law, They do not stand where they can be condemned. They are no longer culprits or criminals; they are taken from under the dominion of the Judge. But what are God's people? Why, they are children, and as long as God is their Father, and they are children, and imperfect children, nature teaches them that it is the duty of children to make a confession to their Father. If my boy should do anything amiss — God forbid it ever should be-suppose it were some petty theft, I might say, "My child, as far as that theft is concerned, no policeman shall take you, you shall not be taken before the bar or put in prison for that; you are quite forgiven as far as that is concerned." I do not wish him to go before the

magistrate and make a confession; but then he has offended me as his father; and I as his father expect him to confess the wrong that he has done to me, and if he does not, I chasten him, not by way of penal infliction, that is not my part as a father, I have nothing to do with penalties to my children, but by way of chastisement, that he may be led to see his fault, and may do it no more. No father who has his wits about him ever chastens his child in the light of punishment for the offense itself; no, he says, that is not my business, the offense must be punished by God, or if it be an offense against the law of the land, by the law of the land; when a father scourges, he does it for chastisement, for the good of the person chastised, not as a vindication of law and order. Now the Lord never chastens his people because of any sin in them, in order to punish them for their sin, for he has punished Christ instead of them — they are quite clear there; but now having become children, and offending, as children, ought they not every day to go before their heavenly Father and confess the sin and acknowledge the iniquity? The grace of God in the heart would teach us all that it should be so. We daily offend as children; we offend, as we could not offend if we were not children. I doubt my Father, I am guilty of a want of love to him, or obedience to him, I offend as I could not offend if I were not his child. Supposing that this offense against my Father is not at once washed away by the cleansing power of the Lord Jesus, what will be the consequence of it? Why, I shall get under the thralldom of bad habit; I shall feel such defilement in my nature, that I shall do again, and again, and again, what I had once done, till I get into the habit of doing it. If I am not washed from these offenses against my Father, I shall feel at a distance from him; I shall begin to doubt his love to me; I shall tremble at him; most likely I shall be afraid to pray to him: I shall get to be like the prodigal, who, while he was a child, was yet far off from his father. If I am not washed, I shall very soon have need to feel the rod, and I shall have it. But oh! beloved, if the Lord Jesus Christ day by day shall come to me, and wash my feet from these defilements of offenses against my Father, why, then I shall to a great extent escape the rod; I shall feel a holy love to my Father; I shall walk in the light of his countenance; I shall have joy and peace through believing, and I shall go through my Christian career, not only as saved, but as one enjoying present peace in God through Jesus Christ my Lord. I think you can see the difference between Christ putting away sin by blood and by water; I think you can see the distinction between confessing sin as a culprit, and confessing sin as a child; and I think you can see how much gratitude you owe to Christ, that after having once set you

free from the law, he day by day, as your Elder Brother, goes in before your Father's face, and still keeps you right before the Father, and when there has been any defilement, or any wrong washes your feet from it, that you may still stand with peace in your conscience, with joy in your heart, with love in your bosom, and with the Father's love shed abroad in you. Here is matter for gratitude, that having once washed head and hands and feet with blood, he still doth daily wash my feet with water. For my part, I mean to keep on praying, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;" and it shall be my joy, that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father," and "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

#### **IV.** The last point is, MATTER FOR IMITATION.

Does Jesus wash our feet? Then we ought to wash one another's feet. Some of our brethren, the Scotch Baptiste, were accustomed to wash the saints' feet literally; I dare say it would not do some of the saints much hurt; but still it never was intended for us to carry out literally the example of the Savior; there is a spiritual meaning here, and what he means is this. If there be any deed of kindness or love that we can do for the very meanest and most obscure of God's people, we ought to be willing to do it—to be servants to God's servants — to feel like Abigail did, when she said to David, "Let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord." Abigail became David's wife, that is the true position of every Christian; but yet she felt she was not worthy even to wash his servants' feet. That must be our spirit. Do you know any poor bedridden soul? Go and talk with that poor woman, or that poor man. Seek to take comfort to that poor man's miserable lodgings. Do you know a brother who is rather angry in temper, and he wants a kind word said to him, and some one says, "I will not speak to any such person as he is?" Do it — do it, my dear brother; go and wash his feet! Do you know one who has gone astray? Some one says, "I would not like to be seen in association with him." My dear friend, you are spiritual; go and restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. Wash his feet! There is another riding the high horse; he is very, very proud. One says, "I am not going to humble myself to him." My dear brother, go to him, and wash his feet! Whenever there is a child of God who has any defilement upon him, and you are able to point it out and rid him of it, submit to any degradation, put yourself in any position, sooner than that child of God should be the subject of sin. Especially let those who are highest among us seek to do the lowest



offices. "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Recollect that Christ's way of rising is to go down. He descended, that he might ascend; and so must we. Let us count that evermore it is our highest honor and our greatest glory, to lay aside all honor and all glory, and to win honor and glory out of shame and humiliation for Christ Jesus' sake. I believe this is done in this Church. I hope we are as free as possible from the feeling of caste: God deliver us from the last relic and remnant of it! Ye are brethren; love one another. "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich in that he is made low." Ye are brethren, and one is your Master, even Christ. Try to carry out every one of you to your utmost the teaching of your Lord, that ye should wash one another's feet. You have an opportunity of doing it in the collection; for I believe that these servants of God, these aged ministers, these ministers who are in great poverty, need to-day that you should by your contributions wash their feet.

# “THE STRONG ONE DRIVEN OUT BY A STRONGER ONE.”

NO. 613

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 5TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.” — Luke 11:21-26.

THE Lord Jesus is ever in direct and open antagonism to Satan. “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed,” has been most emphatically fulfilled. Christ has never tolerated any truce or parley with the evil one, and never will. Whenever Christ strikes a blow at Satan, it is a real blow, and not a feint, and is meant to destroy, not to amend. He never asks Satan’s help to subdue Satan, never fights evil by evil; he uses the weapons which are not carnal, but mighty to the pulling down of strongholds; and he uses them ever with this intention, not to dally with Satan, but to cut up his empire, root and branch. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” There is a deadly, implacable, infinite, eternal hatred between Christ and that sin of which Satan is the representative. No compromise can ever be thought of, no quarter will ever be allowed. The Lord will never turn from

him purpose to bruise Satan under his feet and to cast him into the lake of fire. Hence there was nothing more libellous than the assertion of certain Pharisees in Christ's day, that he cast out devils through Beelzebub, the Prince of devils. O base suggestion, that the Lord of glory was in league with the dunghill Deity, the Prince of devils. He never fights the Lord's battles with the devil's weapons, he has not the most distant affiance with evil. It is not possible that he should be the friend and patron of that spirit of unhallowed charity which for the sake of peace would give tolerance to error. No, he never allies himself with Satan, to advance the kingdom of God, but he comes against him as a strong man armed, determined to fight until he wins a decisive victory. We shall observe this more clearly as we open up the passage now before us.

Our text presents us with a picture of man in his sinful state; then it gives us a representation of man for a time reformed, but eventually subjected to the worst forms of evil; and it also shews us a graphic portrait of man, entirely conquered by the power of the great Redeemer.

**I.** First, WE SHALL ATTENTIVELY LOOK AT THE PICTURE OF MAN AS HE IS IN A STATE OF NATURE. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace."

Observe, that although man's heart was intended to be the throne of God, it has now become the palace of Satan: whereas Adam was the obedient servant of the Most High, and his body was a temple for God's love, now, through the fall, we have become the servants of sin, and our bodies have become the workshops of Satan — "The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." This spirit is called a strong man, and truly so he is: who can stand against him? Like the monster in the book of Job, we may say of him, "Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. Behold, the hope of him is in vain; shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?" "Though a thousand Philistines are smitten hip and thigh with a great slaughter by Samson the avenger of Israel, yet the strong man falls a victim to the stronger fiend. That mighty hero though he could rend a lion, was no match for the lion of the pit, who overcame him to his shame and hurt. Solomon, the wisest of men, was outwitted by Satan, for his heart was led astray by the arch-tempter. Even he who was the sire of men was overthrown by this dread enemy in the early days of innocence and happiness. He is so strong, that if all of us should combine against him, he would laugh at us as Leviathan laugheth at the shaking of the spear.

Strong he is, not simply as possessing force, but in the sense of cunning. He knows how to adapt his temptations to our besetting sins; he discovers fitting times in which to assail us. He understands that there is a time when kings go forth to battle, and he is ever ready for the affray. He is a good swordsman, he knows every cut, and guard, and thrust, and parry, and he knows our weak places, and the joints in our harness. Christians who have ever stood foot to foot with him, will give him credit for this, that he is strong indeed; and unbelievers who have at any time sought to resist his power in their own strength have soon been made to feel that their strength was perfect weakness. He is a strong man with a vengeance, Oh, Christian! well is it for thee that there is a stronger than he: the might of Satan would crush thee to thy ruin if it were not that the almightiness of Christ comes in to the rescue.

It is said of this strong man, moreover, that he is armed. Truly the prince of the power of the air is never without weapons. His principal weapon is the lie. The sword of God's spirit is the truth, but the sword of the evil spirit is the lie. It was by falsehood that he overthrew our race at first, and despoiled us of perfection; and it is with continued falsehoods, of which lie is both the forger and the user, that he continues to destroy the souls of men. He will tell the sinner sometimes that he is too young to think of death and of eternal things; and when this weapon fails he will assure him that it is too late, for the day of grace is over.

*“He feeds our hopes with airy dreams.  
Or kills with slavish fear;  
And holds us still in wide extremes,  
Presumption, or despair.*

*Now he persuades, ‘How easy ‘tis  
To walk the road to heaven!’  
Anon he swells our sins, and cries,  
‘They cannot be forgiven.’*

*Thus he supports his cruel throne  
By mischief and deceit,  
And drags the sons of Adam down  
To darkness and the pit.”*

He has a way of making the worse appear the better reason; he can put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter — make men believe that it is to their own advantage to do that which is causing their everlasting ruin. He can

make men carry coals of fire in their bosoms, and dream that they shall not be burned; he can make them dance upon the brink of hell as though they were on the verge of heaven. Alas! fools that we are, how readily do his lies prevail against us! Then he has the well-feathered arrows of pleasure. The strong man is armed with the lusts of the flesh. Dainty dalliances he offers to some; overflowing cups that sparkle to the eye he presents for others; glittering wealth he gives to the avaricious, and the trump of fame and all the smoke of applause he promises to others. Weapons! why, I cannot attempt to mention all the warlike implements of the Prince of the power of the air. He can hurl fiery darts as thick as hail. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth; when he raiseth up himself the mighty are afraid. Bunyan's half-inspired imagination pictured him thus — "Now the monster was hideous to behold; he was clothed with scales like a fish (and they are his pride); he had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion." He is well armed at every point, and he knows how to arm his slave, — the sinner too; he will plate him from head to foot with mail, and put weapons into his hand against which the puny might of gospel ministers and of human conscience can never prevail.

Then we are told that he wears armor — for we read that the stronger warrior "taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted." Certain it is, the evil spirit is well accoutred in that which is proof against all terrestrial steel. Prejudice, ignorance, evil education — all these are chain-armor with which Satan girds himself. A hard heart is the impenetrable breast-plate which this evil spirit wears; a seared conscience becomes to him like greaves of brass; habitude in sin is a helmet of iron. We know some who, through a long period of years, have harboured within them an evil spirit, which seems to have no joints in its harness at all. It were as easy to draw blood from granite as to reach some men's hearts: the demon who possesses them is not to be wounded by our artillery. "His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone." We have preached at such men, prayed for them, spoken sharply, spoken tenderly, assaulted them from every quarter, wooed them with love divine, thundered at them with the judgments of God and with the terrors of his law, but the strong man is so completely mailed that as yet we have made no impression upon him whatever; when we have smitten him such a blow that he seemed to reel, yet the armor has been thick enough to save him from a deadly wound.

“The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold; the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee; slingstones are turned with him into stubble. The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved.”

Notice, again, this strong man: besides being armed and plated with armor, he is very watchful; for it is said “he keepeth his palace,” keeps it like the faithful warder who with ceaseless tramp and sleepless eye holds watch upon the castle wall. He does not put on the armor to sleep in it. You may find sleeping saints, but never sleeping devils. The restless activity of fallen angels is something awful to contemplate, “they rest not day nor night,” but like ravenous lions go about seeking their prey. When Satan enters a man’s heart, he takes care to watch whenever there is the slightest chance of the truth coming in and driving him from his throne. He puts a double guard on the person when he is under the sound of the Word. He will let you go to those places where the minister never attacks the conscience and never cries aloud against sin, for he feels that there his kingdom is not assailed; but wherever the true gospel is preached, and preached with divine power, hosts of devils are sure to gather, “Because,” says Satan, “there is danger to my dominions now. I will set a double garrison to protect my citadel against the attack of God’s truth.” Beware, O ye saints, when the Lord the Holy Spirit is working, for the great enemy is certain to be doubly active at such seasons. He keepeth his goods. How would I delight to catch him unawares, but this leviathan is not to be taken with a hook, nor is his jaw to be bored through with a thorn. We may drop a warning to the sinner here, we may speak the passing word of exhortation there, we may stand in the corner of yonder street and declare salvation, or we may occupy the pulpit in Jesus’ name, we may use all the means which ingenuity can devise, but Satan is always as prompt as we are, having his unclean birds always ready to carry away any seeds that may be scattered upon the soil. While men sleeps he sows tares, but he never slumbereth himself. As Hugh Latimer used to say, he is the most industrious bishop in England. Other bishops may neglect their dioceses, but Satan never. He is always making visitations and going from place to place upon his evil business to watch after his black sheep. The sinner’s heart must be carried away by storm if it be ever taken, for there is no hope of taking the Evil Spirit by surprise.

We have in the text a good reason given why Satan thus watches over the man whose heart he inhabits, because he considers the man to be his property — “he keepeth his goods.” They are not his in justice; whatever goods there are in the house of manhood must belong to God who built the house, and who intended to tenant it. But Satan up a claim and calls everything in the man his goods. The man’s memory he makes a storehouse for ill words and bad songs; the man’s judgment he perverts so that the scales and weights are false; the man’s love he sets on fire with coals of hell, and his imagination he dazzles with foul delusions. All the powers of the man Satan claims: — “I will have his mouth, he shall swear for me; I will have his eyes, they shall wander after vanity; I will have his feet, they shall take him to the place of sinful amusement; I will have his hands, he shall work for me and be my slave.” The heart is hard and the conscience stupefied, and therefore,

*“Sin like a raging tyrant sits  
Upon his flinty throne,  
And all that’s good is crushed to death,  
Beneath this heart of stone.”*

He claims the whole man to be his own; and it is wonderful how readily his claim is allowed. Men fancy music in the chains with which Satan binds them, and hug the fetters which he hangs upon them. Men cheerfully obey the prince of darkness, and yet it is hard, ah, hard indeed, to bring the followers of Jesus to yield up their members in full obedience to the sweet Prince of Peace.

Nor is this all; Satan not only claims possession, but he claims sovereignty. You perceive it is said, “his palace.” A palace is usually the abode of a king, so Satan considers himself a great king when he dwells in the human heart. Divine sovereignty has ever been the great target of Satan’s attacks, because he aspires to set up his own infernal sovereignty. His sway over men is imperial, and his government despotic. When he takes possession of the human heart he says to his servant, “Go,” and he goeth, and to his captive, “Do this,” and he doeth it. He will not be regulated and ruled by reason, but he will have his own will obeyed in all its madness of rebellion. His declaration is made in apish imitation of the great God. “Cannot I do as I will with my own.” “I am, and there is none beside me.” To what extravagances of sovereignty will not Satan go with men! He will allure them to drunkenness, nor is that enough, he will hurry them into delirium tremens; he will drive them out of their senses and urge them to lay violent

hands upon themselves — nay, he often covers his victims with their own blood shed by themselves. An old preacher took for his text, “When the devils entered into the swine, the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters:” one of his points was “The devil drives his hogs to a bad market;” and there is much truth in the rough assertion; when he gets into men there is no telling where they will go. Another point was, “They ran hard whom the devil drives.” Unto what extremities of sottish folly, cruelty, and self-injury will not men go when once Satan gains possession of them? Like Baal’s priests, they are cutting themselves with knives; like the Gadarene demoniac, dwelling in tombs and wearing no clothes; like the child in the gospel, sometimes cast into the fire and then into the water — such are men when the devil rules them. No king could ever walk in his palace and say, “All this is mine” with such pride as Satan when he walks through the heart of man. He can boastingly cry, “This man will fall down and worship me, he will sacrifice his comfort, his very life to me; he will drain my cups and not refuse the poison in the dregs; he will go upon my service and not ask me whether death is to be the everlasting wages.” Oh! that God had such willing servants, such joyful martyrs as those who obey the devil! You may see the devil’s martyrs in every gin palace, ragged, haggard, and diseased; you may see them in early morning shivering till the time shall come when they shall drink another dram of hell-draught; you may see them in every moonlit street, waiting in the cold, damp mists of night, to be offered up upon his altar to prostitute both body and soul to his unhallowed worship; you may see them in every hospital, rotting into their graves, their bones full of disease, and their very blood polluted with a filthy taint of loathsomeness; you may see them, I say, all emulous to sacrifice soul and body as a whole burnt offering to be wholly consumed by the infernal fire, that they may serve Satan with their whole heart. Oh! that we were half as faithful to God as the devil’s servants are to him. The heart is well called Apollyon’s palace, for he reigns with absolute dominion therein. O eternal God, drive him out.

I must not leave this picture until you have observed that it is said, “while he keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.” This is the most fearful sign in the whole affair. The man is quite undisturbed — conscience does not prick him: why should it? God does not alarm him: who is God, that he should obey his voice? Thoughts of hell never disturb him. “Peace, peace,” says Satan; “it is well with you now — leave these bugbears to those who believe in them.” The wrath of God, which abideth on him, never frets him;



when men are mortifying, they feel no pain in the mortified member. Men who are stupefied with laudanum may be naked, but they are not cold; they may have empty stomachs, but they are not hungry; they may be diseased in body, but they do not feel the torment: they are drunken, and know not their misery: and so it is with the most of carnal men — nothing awakens them. The sermon is listened to, with a remark upon the style of the speaker, but the truth is neglected. A judgment comes — the funeral bell tolls — a tear or two may be shed, but they are soon wiped away, and the man goes his way, like “the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” I know nothing of what it is to be troubled in conscience,” says one; I am quite easy — I am as jolly as the days are long.” I dare say you are: I wish you were not. If you were dissatisfied with your old master, there would be some hope that you would leave him and return to your Father’s house; but so long as you are content with the world, and with the prince who governs it, you will go on, on, on, to your own destruction. Satan does with men as the sirens are fabled to have done with mariners; they sat upon the rocks and chanted lays so harmonious that no mariner, who once caught the sound, could ever resist the impulse to steer his ship towards them, so each vessel voyaging that way was wrecked upon the rocks through their disastrous, but enchanting strain. Such is Satan’s voice; he lures to eternal ruin with the sweetest strains of infernal minstrelsy. Sonatas so inimitably enchanting in their harmony he can play that it is not in poor mortal flesh and blood, unaided by the Spirit of God, to stand against their thrilling witchery. This is the dulcet note “Peace, peace, peace, peace.” O sinner, if thou wert not a fool, thou wouldst stop thine ears to this treacherous lay. For ever blessed be that sovereign grace which has saved us from the enchantments of this destroyer.

The tenant of the heart is called “an unclean spirit.” He is unclean, notwithstanding all the peace he gives you. I pray thee flatter not thyself to the contrary. He is ever the same, unchanged, unchangeable. Perhaps you tell me that you are not subject to any uncleanness; you do not drink nor swear, nor lie; but remember, it is unclean to be unreconciled to God; it is unclean to be a stranger to Christ; it is unclean to disobey God who created you; and above all it is unclean not to love the Redeemer, whose most precious blood has delivered his people from their sins. At his best the devil is no better than a devil, and the heart in which he dwells is no better than a den for a traitor to hide in.

Thus I have given you an outline interpretation of the text — it would need much time to fill up and bring out the whole of its meaning.

**II.** Now let us notice THE PARTIAL REFORMATION HERE DESCRIBED, “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

Observe then that in the case before us the unclean spirit goes out of his own free will. He is not turned out, — there is no conflict — the house still remains his own property, for it is written at the end of the twenty-fourth verse, “I will return unto my house whence I came out.” He retires from his palace of his own free will, intending to return at his leisure or pleasure. There are some persons who appear to be converted, who think they are so themselves and therefore make a profession, and are cheerfully received into the Christian Church because their outward life gives evidence of a very great and remarkable change. I could now picture some who, to my great grief, come under my tearful observation, some who were once with us, but have long since arrived at the last end which was “worse than the first.” When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, he is quite different from what he used to be. Very likely the shop that was open on the Sunday is now shut up; he turns his footsteps to the place where God’s people meet for worship. He begins to pray, even sets up family prayer; he attends prayer meetings, feels some sort of enjoyment in the excitement of religion; he goes where the saints go, and to a great extent in life he acts as they act. The unclean spirit is fairly gone out of the man, and he is another man though not a new creature in Christ Jesus. But I have said there was no struggle about it; it was on a sudden that the spirit went out, and the man jumped into religion. There was no repentance, no conviction, no struggling against depravity, no weeping before the Lord in prayer, and no looking up to the crucified Savior and reading pardon in his wounds; no agonizing struggle after holiness, no wrestling with evil; joy came on the sudden, and the man thought himself saved. The man was a sinner yesterday, and he appears to be a saint to-day, nobody knows how. You talk to him about the work of the Spirit in his soul, convincing him of sin, breaking him with the hammer of the law or by the power of the cross, pounding him in pieces, compelling him to feel that his righteousness is

filthy rags; he does not understand you. The unclean spirit is gone out of the man, and that is all.

Why does the evil spirit leave a man for a time? Has he not some hellish purpose in view? Certainly he has. I think it often is because he feels if he does not go out he will be driven out, but he thinks that by giving way for a time he will satisfy the conscience till he gets it lulled to sleep faster than ever. Thus he will stoop to conquer, retreat to draw his opponent into an ill position; allow his throne to shake, that he may re-establish his dominion permanently. Moreover, he thinks that by letting the man indulge in a little religion for a time, and then turn aside from it, he will make him permanently sceptical so that he will hold him fast by the iron chain of infidelity, and drag him down to hell with that hook in his jaws.

Now, after a time it appears that the evil spirit returned; he could find no rest for himself except in the hearts of the wicked, and therefore he came back again. There is no opposition to his entrance, the door is not locked, or if it be he has the latch-key. He comes in, there is no tenant, no man in possession, no other proprietor. He looks round and cries, "Here is my house. I left it when I took my walks abroad, and I have come back, and here it is ready for me." In due time the devil comes back to those persons who are reformed but not renewed; who are changed but not made new creatures in Christ Jesus. But what does the devil see? First of all he sees the place to be empty; if it had been full he could not have entered again; if Jesus Christ had been at the door there would have been a very terrible struggle for a little time, but it would have ended in Satan being driven away in disgrace; but it is empty and therefore he quietly resumes his sway. The devil shouts his "Halloa!" and there is an echo through every room, but no intruder starts up. "Is Christ here?" No answer. He goes outside and he looks at the lintel, for Christ's mark is sure to be there if Jesus is within. "No mark of blood on the post, Christ is not here," says he, "it is empty, I will make myself at home;" for if Jesus had been there, though he had been hidden in a closet, yet when he came out he would claim possession, and drive out the traitor, and say, "Get thee gone! this is no place for thee; I have bought it with my blood, and I mean to possess it for ever." But it is empty and so Satan fills it with stores of evil. The next thing the fiend notices is that it is swept; as one says, "Swept, but never washed." Sweeping takes away the loose dirt, washing takes away all the filth. O to be washed in Jesus' blood! Here is a man whose house is swept, — the loose sins are gone. He is not a drunkard, there is a pledge over the

mantelpiece. He is no longer lustful, he hates that sin, or says he does, which is as much as the devil wants him to do. The place is swept so tidy, so neat, you would not know him to be the same man as he used to be; and he himself is so proud to think he has got his house so clean, and he stands up at the threshold as he meets the devil with a “Good morning,” and he says “I am not as other men are, I am neither an extortioner, nor a drunkard; nor even as that Christian over yonder, who is not half what he ought to be — nor a tithe so consistent as I am.” And as the devil looks round and finds the place swept, he finds it garnished too. The man has bought some pictures: he has not real faith, but he has a fine picture of it over the fireplace; he has no love to the cross of Christ, but he has a very handsome crucifix hanging on the wall. He has no graces of the Spirit, but he has a fine vase of flowers on the table, of other people’s experiences and other people’s graces, and they smell tolerably sweet. There is a fireplace without fire, but there is one of the handsomest ornaments for the fireplace that was ever bought for money. It is swept and garnished. Oh! the garnished people I have met with!—garnished sometimes with almsgiving, at other times with long-winded prayers; garnished with the profession of zeal, and the pretense of reverence! you will find a zealous Protestant — oh, so zealous! — who would go into fits at the sign of a cross, and yet will commit fornication. Do you think such a case impossible? I know such a case. You find persons shocked, because another boiled a tea-kettle on a Sunday, or insured his life, or assisted at a bazaar, who will cheat and draw the eye-teeth out of an orphan child, if they could get a sixpence by it. They are swept and garnished. Walk in, ladies and gentlemen, did you ever see a house so delightfully furnished as this? How elegant — how tasteful! Just so; but men may be damned tastefully, and go to hell respectably, just as well as they can in a vulgar and debauched fashion.

You see the whole, how it ends. Satan is very pleased to find the place as it is, and thinking that this is too good for one, he goes abroad and asks in seven others of his friends, worse than himself, for some devils are worse than others; and they come in, and hold high holiday in the man’s soul. What do we mean by that? Why, we mean that such persons do really become more wicked, more hardened, more ungodly than they were before they professed to be Christians. It is really a shocking thing that if you want to find a thorough-bred, out-and-out transgressor, you must find one who once made a profession of religion. When Satan wants a servant who will do anything and ask no questions, who will swallow camels as well as

gnats, he finds one that once stood high in the Christian Church. If he can find one who used to sing Christ's song, that is the throat to sing the devil's song with; if he can find one who once sat at the sacramental table, he will say, "This is the man to sit at the head of my banquets and conduct my feasts for me." These renegades, these traitors, these Ahithophels, these Judases, these men who have known the truth and have been once in a manner enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come in a certain sense, and yet fall away, these become like salt that is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill — even men cast them out; they are henceforth trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Have I any such in this place, any who were once swept and garnished, into whom Satan has returned? My friend, from my soul I pity you. What will be your portion? No common hell will be yours. Remember, there are reserved places in the pit, and those are reserved for such as you are. Read the letter of Jude, and you will there find that there are some for whom are reserved "the blackness of darkness for ever." And that is your case, and this will be the aggravation of it — you sat at the Master's table and you must now drink the cup of fire; you preached in Christ's courts, but you must now give forth a dolorous sermon concerning your own apostacy; you sang God's praises once, you must now howl out the miserere of the damned; you had a glimpse of heaven, you shall now have a dread insight into hell; you talked about eternal life, you shall now feel eternal death — plunged in waves of flame, never to rise again, never to hope, never even to die, for to die were bliss. How dreadful shall your case be! — in this world seven times worse than before, but in the world to come, damned, damned with an awful emphasis which common sinners cannot know. I pray God that these truths may make us watchful, make us careful lest we be found hypocrites or self-deceived professors.

**III.** I turn to a much more pleasing duty, which is TO TAKE UP THE SAVIOUR'S DESCRIPTION OF TRUE CONVERSION. "When a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."

Now, observe here is a "stronger than he." This is not the man himself, the man is the house, the man is not so strong as the devil — who is this? This is Jesus Christ who comes by his Spirit into the heart of man, and the Spirit of God is vastly superior to Satanic power, as much as the infinite Creator himself must ever be superior to the finite creature. He who made Satan

knows how to lay at him with his sword, so as to cut Rahab and wound the dragon. It is not, you see, the result of the man's free will; it is not the result of the devil's free will either. It is the result of a stronger than he coming into the soul. As soon as the stronger than he comes in there is a conflict. "He comes upon him," that is to say, he attacks him; and ah, how vehemently does Christ lay to at the great enemy of souls. One sword-cut cuts away the plume of pride; another blow takes away the comfort of sin and another destroys the reigning power of sin. What a struggle there often is when man is worked upon by the Holy Ghost; with all the power of prayer, with all the might of faith, the poor soul struggles against Satan; Christ struggles with all the power of his blood, and the blessings of his Spirit, and yet we know in some cases the arch fiend has been allowed to hold out for days, for weeks, even for months, because of the unbelief of the poor soul. "He could not do many mighty works there," it is written, "because of their unbelief." This fight will sometimes grow so hot that the soul will choose strangling rather than life, and yet the result of it is never doubtful, for you notice in the text that the stronger than he overcomes at the last. Oh, well do I remember when the stronger than Satan overcame in my soul. Five years was there a conflict, more or less. Sometimes my proud heart would not yield to sovereign grace; at another time a wilful spirit would go astray after vanity; but at last, when Jesus showed his wounds and said unto me, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," I could hold out no longer, and the evil spirit could resist no more, the wounds of Christ had wounded the old dragon, and the death of the Savior became the death of sin. Oh! there are many of us who know what it is to be conquered, to be subdued by a power other than our own. and in every case there must be this experience, or there is no real life. Dear hearer, if your religion grew in your own garden it is a weed and good for nothing; if your grace springs as the result of your own willing, your own acting, and your own seeking, it is good for nothing; Christ must seek you, it must be a power far above you, mightier than you, far stronger than you and the devil put together, which must deliver you from your sins.

As soon as ever the stronger man has conquered the enemy, what does he do? He takes his sword of rebellion, snaps it across his knee, and pulls the armor from the back of the unclean spirit. Prejudice, ignorance, hard heartedness, all these are pulled off the old enemy. I think I see him — I think I see the Savior stripping him to his shame and ejecting him from the heart with abhorrence. There, let him go among the dry places and again

seek rest and find none. Happy day! happy day for the palace which he once defiled when he is cast out, and cast out for ever! Christ Jesus then proceeds to divide the spoil. "There is the man's heart, I will take that," says he, "that shall be a jewel in my crown. The man's love I will set as a jewel upon my arm for ever. His memory, his judgment, his power of thought, utterance, and working, — these are all mine," says Christ. He begins to divide the spoil, he puts the broad arrow of the king upon every room in the house, upon every piece of furniture. The garnishing he pulls out, "I will adorn it far better than this," saith he. "There shall be no pictures of faith, but faith; there shall be no ornament in yonder grate except the ornament of the glowing fire of fervid zeal; there shall be no borrowed flowers, but I will train round this window the sweet roses and jessamine of love, and peace of mind; I will wash what was only swept, with my blood I will make it white, and sweet, and clean; and I will strike the lintel and the two side posts with the hyssop, and with the blood mark, and then the destroying angel when he sweeps by shall sheathe his sword, and the black fiend when he would enter shall see the mark there, and go back trembling to his accursed den." This is conversion, the other was only conviction; this is change of heart, the other was only change of life. I do trust, if you have been content with the former, you will now bestir yourselves, and never be satisfied without the latter.

***"O Sovereign grace, my heart subdue,  
I would be led in triumph too;  
Drive the old dragon from his seat,  
With all his hellish crew."***

Sinner, cry to the stronger than you are, to come and help you. You groan under your slavery — I am thankful for it. Cry to the Great Deliverer, he will come, he will come. Is there a conflict going on in you? Remember faith gets the victory. Look to Jesus — look to Jesus, and the battle is won. Cast your poor spirit upon Jesus. Now burn that broom: it is of no use to go on sweeping, you want washing — washing with blood! Come, now, spare that money of yours with which you are going to buy garnishings — they are all rubbish; buy no more. I counsel thee buy of him gold tried in the fire. Come to his precious blood, and be really made clean. Your church-goings, your chapel-goings, your prayers, your almsgivings, your fastings, your feelings, your good works, are all nothing — so much dross and dung — if you try to sweep and garnish your house with them. Cast them all away; fly from your good works as you would from your bad

ones. No more expect to be saved by anything that you can feel that is good, than you would expect to be saved by anything that you feel that is bad:

*“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,  
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

My Lord Jesus, if thou art passing by, travelling in the greatness of thy strength, come and shew thy wonted prowess. Turn aside thou heavenly Samson and rend the lion in this vineyard. If thou hast dipped thy robes in the blood of thy foes, come dye them all again with the blood of my cruel sins! If thou hast trodden the wine press of Jehovah's wrath, and crushed thine enemies, here is another of the accursed crew, come and drag him out and crush him! Here is an Agag in my heart, come and hew him in pieces! Here is a dragon in my spirit, break, O break, his head and set me free from my old state of sin! deliver me from my fierce enemy, and unto thee shall be the praise, for ever and ever. Amen.



# “FOR CHRIST’S SAKE.”

NO. 614

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 12TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“For Christ’s sake.” — Ephesians 4:32.*

THIS is the great argument of awakened sinners, when they seek mercy at God’s hands. Aforetime they could boast of their own righteousness; they could rest upon their feelings, their resolutions, their goodness of heart, or their prayers; but now that God the Holy Spirit has shewn them what they are, and revealed to them the desperate evil of their hearts, they dare not offer any other plea than this — “For Christ’s sake.” They look, and there is no man to succor; they cast their eye around, and there is no helper, and their heart knows neither peace nor hope till they behold the person and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and then straightway their mouth is opened with arguments, and they can plead with God with prevailing reasons, saying, “For Christ’s sake, for Christ’s sake, have mercy upon me.” Indeed, beloved, this is the only argument which can prevail with God in prayer, whether the prayer cometh from saint or sinner. It is true that God did not originally love us for Christ’s sake, for his electing love was sovereign and absolute: the Father loved us not because the Savior died, but the Savior died because the Father loved us from before the foundation of the world. Nevertheless the one only channel of communication between a loving Father and his elect people is the meritorious and glorious person of Christ. The Father gives us no privilege except through his Only-Begotten, nor are we looked upon as accepted or acceptable, except as we stand in and through our Lord Jesus, accepted in the Beloved, perfect in Christ Jesus. I must use no other argument when I plead with God but the name of his dear Son, for this is the sum of all heavenly logic. Whatever covenant mercy I may wish for, this is the key which will unlock the storehouses of heaven, but none other name will prevail with God to scatter his mercies

among undeserving sinners. He who knows how to plant his foot on the solid foothold of “for Christ’s sake,” needs not fear like Jacob to wrestle with the angel of God. But if we forget this in our prayers, we have lost the muscle and sinew from the arm of prayer, we have snapped the spinal column by which the manhood of prayer is sustained erect, we have pulled down about our own ears the whole temple of supplication as Samson did the house of the Philistines. “For Christ’s sake,” this is the one unbuttressed pillar upon which all prayer must lean: take this away, and it comes down with a crash; let this stand, and prayer stands like a heaven-reaching minaret holding communion with the skies.

In two ways, as the Holy Spirit may enable us, we will read the words before us. It is God’s argument for mercy — “For Christ’s sake.” It is our reason for service — “For Christ’s sake.”

## **I. GOD’S ARGUMENT FOR MERCY.** He forgives us “for Christ’s sake.”

Here let us first look at the force of this motive; and then, secondly, let us notice some qualifications in it, which may, through God’s blessing, be the means of comforting seeking sinners who desire to find rest in and through Jesus Christ.

**1.** Let us consider the force of this motive by which God is moved to forgive sinners, “For Christ’s sake.” You know that if we do a thing for the sake of a person, several considerations may work together to make our motive powerful, that we may be willing, not only to do some things, but many things; nay, all things, for the sake of the individual admired or beloved.

The first thing which will move us to do anything for another’s sake is his person, with its various additions of position and character. The excellence of a man’s person has often moved others to high enthusiasm, to the spending of their lives; ay, to the endurance of cruel deaths for his sake. In the day of battle, if the advancing column wavered for a single moment, Napoleon’s presence made every man a hero. When Alexander led the van, there was not a man in all the Macedonian ranks who would have hesitated to lose his life in following him. For David’s sake the three mighties broke through the host, at imminent peril of their lives, to bring him water from the well of Bethlehem. Some men have a charm about them which enthral the souls of other men, who are fascinated by them and count it their highest delight to do them honor. There have been, in different ages,

leaders, both warlike and religious, who have so entirely possessed the hearts of their followers that no sacrifice was counted too great, no labor too severe. There is much to move the heart in excellence of person. How shall I, in a fitting manner, lead you to contemplate the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, seeing that his charms as far exceed all human attractions as the sun outshines the stars! Yet this much I will be bold to say, that he is so glorious that even the God of heaven may well consent to do ten thousand things for his sake. Brethren, we believe our Lord Jesus Christ to be very God of very God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, essential Deity. Jesus is no distinct God, separate from the Father, but, in a mysterious manner, he is one with the Father, so that the old Jewish watchword still stands true. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord," and yet Jesus is Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness. Besides this, he, for us men, and for our salvation, took upon himself the form and nature of man — became incarnate, as the virgin's Son, and, as such, lived a life of perfection, never sinning, always full of love and holy service, both to God and man. There he stands: by the eye of faith we may see him — "God over all, blessed for ever;" and yet man, of the substance of his mother, he stands to plead before the eternal throne; Almighty God, all-perfect man. He wears upon his head a crown, for he is a prince of the house of David, and his dominion is an everlasting dominion. Upon his bosom glitters the bejewelled breastplate, for he is a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec, and over his shoulders hangs the mantle of prophecy, for he is a prophet, and more than a prophet. Now, as he stands there, adored of angels, worshipped by cherubim and seraphim, having the keys of heaven, and earth, and hell at his girdle-master of winds and waves, Lord of providence, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords; I wonder not, that such a person should prevail with the Father, and that God, for his sake, should bestow innumerable blessings upon the unworthy for whom he pleads. He is the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely! His head is as the much fine gold; his lips like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh; his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; his mouth is most sweet, yea he is altogether lovely. "The whole creation can afford

*“But some faint shadows of my Lord;  
 Nature, to make his beauties known,  
 Must mingle colors not her own.  
 Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,  
 Nor heaven, his full resemblance bears;  
 His beauties we can never trace,  
 Till we behold him face to face.”*

In the surpassing majesty of his person lies a part of the force of the plea. A far greater power lies in near and dear relationship. The mother, whose son had been many years at sea, pined for him with all a mother's fondness. She was a widow, and her heart had but this one object left. One day there came to the cottage door a ragged sailor. He was limping on a crutch, and seeking alms. He had been asking at several houses for a widow of such-and-such a name. He had now found her out. She was glad to see a sailor, for never since her son had gone to sea had she turned one away from her door, for her son's sake. The present visitor told her that he had served in the same ship with her beloved boy; that they had been wrecked together and cast upon a barren shore; that her son had died in his arms, and that he had charged him with his dying breath to take his bible to his mother — she would know by that sign that it was her son — and to charge her to receive his comrade affectionately and kindly for her son's sake. You may well conceive how the best of the house was set before the stranger. He was but a common sailor; there was nothing in him to recommend him. His weather-beaten cheeks told of service, but it was not service rendered to her: he had no claim on her, and yet there was bed and board, and the widow's hearth for him. Why? Because she seemed to see in his eyes the picture of her son — and that book, the sure token of good faith, opened her heart and her house to the stranger. Relationship will frequently do far more than the mere excellence of the person. Bethink you, brethren, Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. Our God had but one begotten Son, and that Son the darling of his bosom. Oh, how the Father loved him. It is not possible for us to measure divine love, for we have no measuring line. Human love at best is only finite even when it reaches its very highest. When we lunge into the depths of human love, there is yet a bottom; but divine love has neither shore nor bound. Little can we tell what unity of essence means. The divine persons are one in essence — one God. We cannot therefore conceive what affection must spring from this closest of all known unities. Oh, how Jehovah loves him! And yet that dear Son of his, for our sakes left the starry throne of heaven, became a man, suffered,

bled, and died; and when we come to mercy's bar, bringing with us Christ's own promise, the eternal Father sees Jesus in our eyes, bids us welcome to mercy's table and to mercy's house, for the sake of him who is his only begotten Son.

Still I have only advanced to the border of my subject. The force of the words "For Christ's sake" must be found deeper still, namely in the worthiness of the person and of his acts. Many peerages have been created in this realm which descend from generation to generation, with large estates, the gift of a generous nation, and why? Because this nation has received some signal benefits from one man and has been content to ennoble his heirs for ever for his sake. I do not think there was any error committed when Marlborough or Wellington were lifted to the peerage; having saved their country in war, it was right that they should be honored in peace; and when for the sake of the parents perpetual estates were entailed upon their descendants, and honors in perpetuity conferred upon their sons, it was only acting according to the laws of gratitude. Let us bethink ourselves of what Jesus Christ has done, and let us understand how strong must be that plea — "For Jesus' sake." The law of God was violated; Jesus Christ came into the world and kept it — kept it so that out of the whole ten commands there is not one whose clamorous tongue can lay anything to his charge. Here was a divine dilemma: God must be just, yet he willed to save his people. How could these two things meet? Where was the man who could break down the mountain which separated justice and mercy, so that they could kiss each other. God must punish sin, and yet he will be gracious to whom he will be gracious. How shall these two things agree? Forth came the priests, with their various sacrifices; but the slaughter of bullocks, and heifers, and rams, and he-goats, could not make God just. What comparison could there be between rivers of the blood of fed beasts and the sin of man? But Jesus came — the great solution of the divine enigma — Jesus came: eternal God, but yet perfect man, and he bowed his head to the ignominious death of the cross; his hands were pierced, his feet were nailed, his soul was sorrowful, even unto death.

*"Jesus, our Lord and God,  
Bore sin's tremendous load,  
Praise ye his name;  
Tell what his arm hath done,*

*What spoils from death he won;  
Sing his great name alone;  
Worthy the Lamb!"*

God was just: he punished human guilt in the person of man's representative, Jesus of Nazareth. God is gracious: he accepts every believing sinner for the sake of Jesus Christ. Think, then, of what Christ has done, and you will see the force of the argument. He has honored the law of God, which man had dishonored, and has opened a way for God's mercy, which man's sin had fast closed up. Oh, God, thy Son has brought back what he took not away: he has taken the prey from the mighty, and the lawful captive he has delivered; like another David, he has snatched the sheep from the jaw of the lion, and delivered the lamb from the paw of the bear. Like another Samson, he has slain thine enemies, and taken the gates of their strongholds upon his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill. Every wound which he endured upon the cross, every stroke which he felt in Pilate's hall, every drop of blood which he sweat in Gethsemane, strengthens the plea "for Christ's sake."

Still, still I think I have not yet arrived at the force of the words. If any stipulation has been made, then the terms "or his sake" become more forcible, because they are backed by engagements, promises, covenants. In Christ's case solemn promises have been exchanged. There was a distinct engagement made between the Judge of men and the Redeemer of our souls, and the prophet Isaiah has published the engagement, "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Yet again, "I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;" and still further, "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." There was a distinct transaction then of ancient date between the Father and the Son, in which the Son stipulated that he would bear the sin of his people; he was to be the scapegoat for his people Israel; and then it was solemnly engaged on the part of the Divine Judge of all the earth, that he would give him the souls of the redeemed to be his portion for ever. Now, brethren, there is a strength in the plea, "for Christ's sake." Oh God, with reverence would we speak of thee, but how couldst thou be just if thou did not save those for whom Jesus shed his precious blood. Brethren, we speak as unto honest men: would you, being men, first of all accept a surety and a substitute, and then expect the debtor to pay the debt himself? Look at human

governments—if a man were drafted into the army and should find a substitute, does the law afterwards seize the man himself? And shall God be less just than man? Shall the supreme king of heaven be less just than the kings of earth. If Christ has paid my debt, payment God’s justice cannot demand of me; it cannot expect the same debt to be twice paid. Justice cannot demand payment

*“First at my bleeding surety’s hands,  
And then again at mine.”*

If Christ served in that dread warfare for me as my substitute, how can it be that after this I should myself be driven to the edge of the sword. Impossible! Beloved, see that scapegoat yonder. Israel’s sins have been confessed upon it. The high priest has laid his hand on the victim’s head, it is led away by the hand of a fit man; he sets it free, watches it — it is out of sight. He climbs a rock, looks far away to the east, the west, the north, the south — he cannot see it, he waits awhile, looks with anxious eye, it is gone! and he comes back and tells the people of Israel that the sin has been typically carried away upon the scapegoat’s head. Now, Christ is the fulfillment of the scapegoat. Our sins were laid on him: he is gone — gone where? “Ye shall seek me but ye shall not find me,” saith he: gone into the desolate regions of the dead. The scapegoat, Christ, has carried away into his own tomb the sins of all his people for ever. Now, was that a farce, or was it a reality? Did Christ take away sin, or not? If he did, then how can men be punished for sins which Jesus took away, for the sins for which Christ was punished? If he did not suffer for sin, then where is the deliverance for a soul of Adam born? Oh you that receive general redemption, you know not what you receive; you who talk of a universal atonement which does not make an atonement for all sin, know not what you affirm; but we, who speak of a special atonement made for every soul that ever hath believed or ever shall believe, we speak of something sure, certain, worthy of the soul’s resting itself upon, since it doth save every soul for whom it was offered up.

There remains only one other thought upon this point. It tends very much to strengthen the plea “for Christ’s sake,” if it be well known that it is the desire of the person that the boon should be granted, and if, especially, that desire has been and is earnestly expressed. Oh how glad we ought to be to think that Christ when we plead his name, never tells us that we are going too far and taking liberties! No, beloved, if I anxiously ask for mercy,

Christ has asked for mercy for me long ago. There is never a blessing for which a believer pleads but Christ pleads for it too; for “he ever liveth to make intercession for us.” Our supplications become his supplications and our desires when indited of the Spirit are his desires. In heaven he points to his wounds, the mementoes of his grief, and he cries — “Father, for my sake grant this favor to these poor undeserving ones; give them blessing as thou wouldst give me blessing: be kind and gracious to them, as thou wouldst be kind and tender towards me.” This makes the plea omnipotent. It is not possible but that it should mightily prevail with God.

**2.** Pausing a minute, let us enumerate some few other qualifications of this plea by way of comfort to trembling seekers. This motive, we may observe, is with God a standing motive; it cannot change. Suppose, poor sinner, that God offered to forgive for your own sake. Then if at one time you were penitent and broken-hearted, there would be hope for you; but at another time you might be bemoaning the hardness of your heart and powerlessness to repent, and then there would be no motive why God should bless you; but you see Christ is always as much worthy at one time as another, and therefore God has the same reason for blessing you, a poor wandering soul to-day, as he can have had twenty years ago, and if you have grown grey in sin, if you have become like a sere piece of wood ready for the fire, yet this motive does not wear out; it has the dew of its youth upon it. God for Christ’s sake forgives little children, and for the same reason he can forgive the man who has passed his threescore years and ten. As long as you are in this world, this is a standing reason for mercy.

Remember, again, that this is a mighty reason. It is not merely a reason why God should forgive little sins, or else it would be a slur upon Christ, as though he deserved but little. Canst thou tell how great thy sin is? “Oh,” sayest thou, “It is high as heaven, it is deep as hell;” now canst thou tell how great Christ’s worthiness is? I will tell thee that his worthiness is deeper than hell can be, and higher than heaven itself. What, if thy sin could reach from east to west, and from the highest star to the depth of the abyss, yet the worthiness of Christ is a fullness which filleth all in all, and therefore it would cover all thy sins. Thy sins, like Egypt’s hosts, are many and mighty; Christ’s worthiness is like the flood of the Red Sea, able to drown the whole, so that not one of their host shall be left; they shall sink into the bottom like a stone. Thy sins are like Noah’s flood, which drowned all mankind; Christ’s worthiness is like Noah’s ark, which swims above the tide and mounts the higher as the flood grows deeper. The



deeper thy sin the more is Christ's merit exalted above the heavens when Jehovah forgives thee all thine iniquities. Think not little of Christ. I would not have thee think little of sin, but still think more of Christ. Sin is finite; it is the creature's act. Christ is infinite; he is omnipotent. Whatever then thy sin may be, Christ is greater than thy sin, and able to take it away.

Then, brethren, it is a most clear and satisfactory, I was about to say, most reasonable reason, a motive which appeals to your own common sense? Can you not already see how God can be gracious to you for Christ's sake? We have heard of persons who have given money to beggars, to the poor; not because they deserved it, but because they would commemorate some deserving friend. On a certain day in the year our Horticultural Gardens are opened to the public, free. Why, why should they be opened free? What has the public done? Nothing. They receive the boon in commemoration of the good Prince Albert. Is not that a sensible reason? Yes. Every day in the year the gates of heaven are opened to sinners free. Why? For Jesus Christ's sake. Is it not a most fitting reason? If God would glorify his Son, how could he do better than by saving, "For the sake of my dear Son, set the pearly gates of heaven wide open, and admit his chosen ones. See these myriads of spirits, they are all admitted to their throne of immortal glory for the sake of my dear Son. They are happy, but they are happy for his sake. They are holy, but they are holy for his sake." Casting their crowns at his feet, they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." You perceive at once that this reason appeals to common sense, and therefore I hope, dear friends, you will lay hold of it.

Let me say, poor sinner, that it is a reason applicable to your case. If you can — think of any one good and solid reason why God should forgive you! Turn them all over. You cannot see one! I know the time when I could not find a half a reason why God should save me, but I could find fifty thousand reasons why he should damn me; but when I see that, "For Christ's sake," O that is a reason; that is a good reason — it is a reason I can get hold of. Suppose me to be the blackest sinner out of hell, how it will glorify Christ if, for Christ's sake, the blackest sinner that ever lived should be snatched from hell and taken to heaven for his sake. Suppose I have been a blasphemer, unchaste, an adulterer, a murderer — what then? "For Christ's sake." The more sin I have, the more glorious will the merit of Christ seem to be, when, in opposition to all my unworthiness, it brings me pardon and eternal life, and takes me to the enjoyments of his right

hand. Sinner, grasp this motive. I know where you have been: you have been raking about in that filthy dunghill of your own heart. You have been turning the filth over, to find a jewel in it. You will never find one. The jewels which once belonged to mankind, were all lost by our father Adam. I know what you have been doing. You have been trying to be better in order to deserve well of God. Thus you thought you would manufacture a reason which should move the heart of God. Leave off this foolish work: come with nothing in your hands but Christ. When the Molossians were threatened by their king to be cut to pieces for their rebellion, they pleaded very hard, but no argument would touch his heart till, one day, one of their ambassadors saw his son in the palace; catching him up in his arms, he took and laid him down before his father's feet, and said, "For thy son's sake have pity upon us." Now, do this, sinner, take Christ in thine arms and say, "For Christ's sake." The whole pith of the gospel lies here. All true theology is comprehended in this, "For Christ's sake." Substitution — saving the guilty through the innocent; substitution-blessing the unworthy through the worthy. Do try this precious plea, poor soul, and I will warrant thee that, ere long, thou shalt find peace with God, if thou canst understand the power of this argument.

I may close these reflections by observing, that this is the only motive, the only motive which can ever move the heart of God. You may cry as long as you will, reform as much as you please, pray as earnestly as you like, but the gate of heaven will never stir to your knockings till you plead, "For Jesus' sake!" There is the "Open Sesame," which will make the gates of the city turn on their hinges; but if thou hast not this watchword, all thy doings and almsgivings, and praying, and what not, will be but a heap of filth, piled up against heaven's gate. Do remember that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid," and that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," save Jesus Christ, the Righteous. Use that! Plead that, and you shall succeed with God!

**II.** "FOR CHRIST'S SAKE," IS THE BELIEVER'S GREAT MOTIVE FOR SERVICE. Two or three hints as to what kind of service may be expected of us; then a little exhortation by way of stirring us up to do this service for Christ.

**1.** We begin with a few hints as to what service is expected of us. One of the first things which every Christian should feel bound to do "for Christ's

sake” is to avenge his death. “Avenge his death,” says one, “upon whom?” Upon his murderers. And who were they? Our sins? our sins!

*“Each of our crimes became a nail,  
And unbelief the spear.”*

The very thought of sin having put Jesus to death should make the Christian hate it with a terrible hatred. I do not wonder that the highlanders bit their lips and marched with awful determination and dread resolve of vengeance against the rebel sepoys, when they recollected how the murdered women filled up the well of Cawnpore. Every man must have felt then that he was twenty men in one for retribution, and when his arm smote, he wished to concentrate all the might of justice into each stroke of his sword. When I recollect that my sins tore my Savior’s body on the tree, took the crown from his head, and the comfort from his heart, and sent him down into the shades of death, I vow revenge against them. “O sin! Happy shall he be that taketh thy little ones and dasheth them against a stone,” yea, doubly blessed is he who, like Samuel, shall hew the Agag of his sins in pieces before the Lord, and not spare so much as one single fault, or folly, or vice, because it slew the Savior. Be holy, be pure, be just, be ye separate from sinners for Christ’s sake.

Then, next, the Christian is expected to exalt his Master’s name, and to do much to honor his memory, for Christ’s sake. You remember that queen, who, when her husband died, thought she could never honor him too much, and built a tomb so famous, that though it was only named from him, it remains, to this day, the name of every splendid memorial — the mausoleum. Now let us feel that we cannot erect any thing too famous for the honor of Christ — that our life will be will spent in making his name famous. Let us pile up the unhewn stones of goodness, self-denial, kindness, virtue, grace; let us lay these one upon another, and build up a memorial for Jesus Christ, so that whosoever passes us by, may know that we have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. Should we not, for his sake, care for the growth of his kingdom and the welfare of his subjects? Ought we not to minister to the wants of his servants, and comfort the sorrows of his friends? If he has a poor brother anywhere, is it not at once an honor and a duty to aid him? As David cherished Mephibosheth, who was lame in his feet, for the sake of Jonathan, so should you and I look after every heavy-laden, faint-hearted Christian, for the sake of Jesus: bearing one another’s burdens, because Christ bore our burden; weeping

with them that weep, because Jesus wept; helping those who ask our help, because God has laid help upon one that is mighty, even our Redeemer.

And above all, “for Jesus’ sake” should be a motive to fill us with intense sympathy with him. He has many sheep and some of them are wandering; let us go after them, my brethren, for the shepherd’s sake. He has pieces of money which he has lost; let us sweep the house, and light our candle, and seek diligently till we find them, “for Jesus’ sake.” He has brethren who are playing the prodigal; let us seek to bring them back “for Christ’s sake.” “Let the soul of the poorest little street Arab, let the soul of the grossest scoundrel and the most abandoned harlot be very dear to us for Jesus’ sake.” “Let us care even for the obstinate and rebellious for Jesus’ sake.” As you look at souls think you see him weeping over them, as you look at perishing sinners think you see his blood bespattered on them, and you will love them “for Jesus’ sake.” Oh! brethren, you who are doing nothing for Christ, who come here and listen to me, who sit at his table and take the bread and wine in remembrance of him, what will you do when your Master comes, when you have to confess that you did nothing for him; your love was of such a sort that you never showed it, you talked of it, but you never gave to his cause, you never worked for his name? Out on such love as that! What do men think of it, a love that never shows itself in action? Why, they say, “Open rebuke is better than secret love of that kind;” you had better have rebuked Christ than to have had a sneaking, miserable, untrue, unloving love to him, a love so weak that it was never powerful enough to actuate you to a single deed of self-denial, of generosity, of heroism, or zeal. Oh, brethren, let it not be so with us any longer, but let us seek by God’s grace that, “for Jesus’ sake,” we may have a sympathy with him in yearning over the souls of men, and endeavoring to bring them to a knowledge of his salvation.

**2.** A few words, lastly, by way of exhortation on this point, and I will not weary your attention by longer talk. Clear as the sound of a trumpet startling men from slumber, and bewitching as the sound of martial music to the soldier when he marches to the conflict, ought to be the matchless melody of this word, “For Christ’s sake.” It ought to make men perform deeds which should fit them to rank with angels. It ought to bring out of every regenerate man more than was ever forced from manhood by any other word let it have what charm it might. It ought to make the least among us valiant as David, and David as the servant of the Lord. Think, my brethren, what mighty wonders other words have wrought. For

philosophy's sake what have not men suffered? They have wasted their health over unhealthy furnaces, breathing deleterious gases; they have worn out their days and their nights burning the midnight oil; they have spent their last farthing to acquire the secrets of nature, beggared themselves and their families, to unravel mysteries which have brought no more substantial reward than the honor of learned approbation and conscious power. The martyrs of science are innumerable. If some one would write their story it would make a bright page in human history. Think again of what men have done for discovery's sake by way of travelling. Take down the books of modern travelers and you wilt be astounded at their zeal, their courage, and disinterestedness. They have mocked the fever, have laughed at death, have left friends and kindred and the comfort of home, have gone to inhospitable climes among more inhospitable men, have wandered about in weariness, wet with the rain, frozen with the cold, or burnt up with the heat, hungry and thirsty, sick and weary, have journeyed on and on to find the source of a river or a passage through a frozen strait. When I think of such expeditions as those of Ross and Franklin, I marvel at and reverence the endurance of humanity; how these bold men have braved old Boreas in his own ice-palace, and faced grim desolation in its own domain. The text "Quit you like men" gets a new emphasis when we think of these conquerors of famine, and cold, and peril; and shall the inquisitiveness of mankind prove a stronger motive than God — given love to Jesus! If so, shame be upon us!

Think, again, of what men have done for false religion's sake. In years gone by, the scimitar flashed from the Arab's sheath, and the Arab's eye flashed fire at the very name of Mahomet, For the one dogma, "God is God, and Mahomet is his prophet," blood flowed in rivers, and fields were strewn with the slain rejoicing to be slain, because they dreamed that Paradise was to be found under the shadow of swords. Think how the heathen cast themselves before the car of Juggernaut, to be crushed into a hideous mass of mangled flesh, and broken bones, and oozing blood, for their god's sake! their filthy horrid god's sake! How many have given themselves to die by Gunga's stream! how many a woman has gone up to the funeral pile, and thrown herself upon her husband's dead body, giving herself an offering to her cruel gods. I know not what men have not suffered for the horrid deities which they have chosen for themselves. Martyrs to fanaticism and deception are not a few, and shall the truth find us unready and unwilling to run risks for its sake!

Review, my brethren, the heroic struggles of the Lord's people, and here we turn to the brightest page of the world's annals! Think of the suffering of God's people through the Maccabean war! How marvellous was their courage when Antiochus Epiphanes took the feeblest among the Jews to constrain them to break the law, and found himself weak as water before their dauntless resolve. Aged women and feeble children overcame the tyrant. Their tongues were torn out; they were sawn asunder; they were broiled on the fire; they were pierced with knives; but no kind of torture could subdue the indomitable spirit of God's chosen people. Think of the Christian heroism of the first centuries; remember Blandina tossed upon the horns of bulls and set in a red-hot iron chair; think of the martyrs given up to the lions in the amphitheatre, amidst the revilings of the Roman mob; dragged to their death at the heels of wild horses, or, like Marcus Arethusa, smeared with honey and stung to death by bees; and yet in which case did the enemy triumph? In none! They were more than conquerors through him that loved them! And why? Because they did it all "For Christ's sake," and Christ's sake alone. Think of the cruelty which stained the snows of the Switzer's Alps, and the grass of Piedmont's Valleys, blood-red with the murdered Waldenses and Albigenses, and honor the heroism of those who, in their deaths, counted not their lives dear to them "for Christ's sake." Walk this afternoon to your own Smithfield, and stand upon the sacred spot where the martyrs leaped into their chariot of fire, leaving their ashes on the ground "for Jesus' sake." In Edinburgh, stand on the well known stones consecrated with covenanting gore, where the axe and the hangman set free the spirits of men who rejoiced to suffer for Christ's sake. Remember those fugitives for Christ's sake, "meeting in the glens and crags of Scotia's every hill, for Christ's sake." They were daunted by nothing — they dared everything "for Christ's sake." Think, too, of what missionaries have done "for Christ's sake." With no weapon but the Bible, they have landed among cannibals, and have subdued them to the power of the gospel; with no hope of gain, except in the reward which the Lord has reserved for every faithful one, they have gone where the most enterprising trader dared not go, passed through barriers impenetrable to the courage of men who sought after gold, but to be pierced by men who sought after souls. Think of the Moravians, first and choicest of warriors for God. Think of them selling themselves for slaves that they might teach other slaves the liberty of the gospel, consenting to be confined in the lazar house for life, with the absolute certainty of rotting away piece-meal with leprosy and with diseases fouler still, only that they

might save the leper's soul and have an opportunity of teaching to the poor diseased one the way by which his spirit might be made whole through Jesus the great physician. And what have you and I ever done? Oh, pigmies, dwarfs, sons of nobodies, our names will never be remembered. What have we done? Preached a few times, but with how little fire; prayed at certain seasons, but with what little passion; talked now and then to sinners, but with what half-heartedness given to the cause of Christ, but seldom given till we denied ourselves and made a real sacrifice; believed in God at times, but oh with what unbelief mixed with our faith; loved Christ, but with what cold, stolid hearts. "For Christ's sake." Do you feel the power of it? Then let it be like a rushing mighty wind to your soul to sweep out the clouds of your worldliness, and clear away the mists of sin. "For Christ's sake," be this the tongue of fire that shall sit on every one of you: "for Christ's sake" be this the divine rapture, the heavenly afflatus to bear you aloft from earth, the divine spirit that shall make us bold as lions and swift as eagles in our Lord's service. Fixed, fixed on God with a constancy that is not to be shaken, resolute to honor him with a determination that is not to be turned aside, and pressing on with an ardor never to be wearied.

I cannot preach as I would on such a theme as this, but I leave it with you. How much owest thou unto my Lord? Has he ever done anything for thee? Has he forgiven thy sins? Has he covered thee with a robe of righteousness? Has he set thy feet upon a rock? Has he established thy goings? Has he prepared heaven for thee? Has he prepared thee for heaven? Has he written thy name in his book of life? Has he given thee countless blessings? Has he a store of mercies which eye hath not seen nor ear heard? Then do something for Christ worthy of his love. Wake up from natural sleepiness, and this very day, or ever the sun goeth down, do thou something in some way by which thou shalt prove that thou dost feel the power of that divine motive, "for Christ's sake." May God accept and bless you, dear friends, "for Jesus' sake." Amen.

*"See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"*

*His dying crimson, like a robe,  
Spreads o'er his body on the tree;  
Then am I dead to all the globe,  
And all the globe is dead to me.*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all."*



# HUMAN DEPRAVITY AND DIVINE MERCY.

NO. 615

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 19TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite anymore every thing living as I have done.” — Genesis 8:21.

PETER tells us that Noah’s ark and baptism are figures of salvation. He puts the two together as pictures of the way by which we are saved. Noah was not saved by the world’s being gradually reformed and restored to its primitive innocence, but a sentence of condemnation was pronounced, and death, burial, and resurrection ensued. Noah must go into the ark and become dead to the world; the floods must descend from heaven, and rise upward from their secret fountains beneath the earth, the ark must be submerged with many waters — here was burial; and then after a time, Noah and his family must come out into a totally new world of resurrection life. It is the same in the figure of baptism the person baptized, if he be already dead with Christ, is buried; not purified and improved, but buried beneath the wave; and when he rises he professes that he enjoys newness of life. Baptism is setting forth just what Noah’s ark set forth, that salvation is by death and burial. You must be dead to the world; the flesh must be dead with Christ, buried with Christ — not improved, not made better, but utterly put aside as unimprovable, as worthless, dead, a thing to be buried and to be forgotten; and we must come forth in resurrection life, feeling that above us there is a new heaven, and beneath us a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, seeing that we are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

It would be very instructive to dwell upon each point of the resemblance between Noah's deliverance and the salvation of every elect soul. Noah enters into the ark: there is a time when we distinctly enter into Christ and become one with him. Noah was shut in the ark so that he could never come out again till God should open the door: there is a time when every child of God is shut in, when faith and full assurance give him an evidence that he is indissolubly one with Christ Jesus; grasped in Christ's hand so that none can pluck him thence, hidden in Christ's loins so that none can separate him from the love of God. Then comes the flood: there is a season in the Christian's experience when he discovers his own depravity; he is saved, he is in the ark, he is however still a sinner, still the subject of inbred lusts: on a sudden all these corruptions break up, they beat upon his ark, they assail his faith, they endeavor if possible to drown his soul in sin, but he is not destroyed by them all, for by the grace of God he is where other men are not, he is where he cannot be drowned by sin, he is in Christ Jesus. He mounts as the floods deepen; the more he feels the depth of his depravity, the more he admires the fullness of the atoning sacrifice, the more terrible the temptation the more joyous is his consolation in Christ Jesus; and so he rises in holy communion towards his God. Then comes the wind: typical of the breath of the sacred Spirit by which the floods of corruption are assuaged and peace reigns within, and the soul sings, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then the tops of the mountains appear: sanctification takes place upon a part of the man; there are some bright graces which glisten out of the general flood of corruption, there are some points of his new-born nature which delight him with their beauty. His ark has grounded and settled: he no longer floats, so to speak, tossed about with a struggling faith, and contending unbelief, but he feels that as Christ Jesus is for ever seated firmly at the right hand of God, so he, in Christ Jesus, has entered into rest. The ark grounded on the top of Ararat: so does the believer's experience come to a settled condition; he is no more moved about with fears and questioning, but he rejoices in hope of the glory of God. He sends forth his thoughts in search after evidence of his complete salvation, and probably he sends out some of his own ignorant carnal expectations, just as Noah sent out the raven; these ignorant imaginations of what the work of the Spirit is, go forth and they never return because no unclean child of the old Adam can be a discernor of the new world. Then he sends out the dove-holy desires, earnest prayers go to and fro; by and bye they come back with a token for good, some choice mercy from the hand of

God, an olive branch of assured peace, and the believer surely knows not only that he is in Christ, not only that he is grounded in Christ, but that all the waters are assuaged, all sin is gone, all danger removed, all death destroyed. Then occurs a period wherein God opens the door; Christ had been as a sort of prison to the Christian up till then, the cross had been a burden, he did not rejoice in liberty; but God the Father now comes with the blessed Spirit and opens the door, and the believer is fully at liberty in the new world.

The saved soul's first act is, like Noah, to build an altar unto God and, as a priest, to offer sacrifice, which as it rises to heaven, is accepted because it is a memorial of Christ. The Lord smells a sweet savor, and though the believing man is still full of sin and from his youth up has evil imaginings, yet he hears the covenant voice which says, "I will no more curse, I will no more smite;" he hears the covenant promise which confirms for ever the faithfulness of God, and he rejoices to inherit, like Noah, a new world wherein dwelleth righteousness.

I do not lay any stress upon these interpretations, but I know the apostle says concerning Hagar and Sarah, "which things are an allegory," and I believe that the book of Genesis is a book of dispensational truth, and if it were rightly read, not by the eye of curiosity, but by the heart of the student who has been made wise to see the deep things of God, very much of divine and holy teaching would be discoverable in it. But now I come to the text itself.

We have here, first, a very sad and painful fact, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth;" we have, secondly, God's most extraordinary reasoning, "I will not again curse the ground for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil;" then, thirdly, we have some inferences less extraordinary but practical to ourselves from the text.

**I.** To begin then with the text, we have here A MOST PAINFUL FACT, that man's nature is incurable, — "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

You will remember, before the flood, in the fifth verse of the sixth chapter, it is written, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." After the flood it is just the same. The description in the sixth chapter belonged to all the antediluvian race. You might have hoped that

after so terrible a judgment when only a few, a picked and peculiar few, that is eight, were saved by water, that then as man began anew with a better stock, the old branches that were sere and rotten being cut away, — that now the nature of man would be improved. It is not one whit so; the same God who, looking at man, declared that his imaginations were evil before the flood, pronounces the very same verdict upon them afterwards. Oh God! how hopeless is human nature! How impossible is it that the carnal mind should be reconciled to God! How needful is it that thou shouldst give us now hearts and right spirits, seeing that the old nature is so evil that even the floods of thy judgments cannot cure it of its evil imaginations!

I would have you studiously notice the words used in both these passages, — the antediluvian and the postdiluvian verdict of God. Look at the fifth verse of the sixth chapter, — God saw not only outward sin—that was great and multiplied, and cried to him for vengeance; he saw sin in the sons of men, the descendants of Cain; worse still, he saw treachery and departure from God in the sons of the chosen one, the sons of Seth had gone astray also. The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and the two races became mingled so as to produce monsters of iniquity. But, worse than that, he saw that the thoughts of men's hearts were evil: man could not think without being evil; nay, more, the substratum which underlies actual thought, unformed, unfashioned thought, the eggs, the embryos of thought, called here the imagination of the thought, the first conception, the infant motions of the soul, all these he found to be evil. But observe, he says they were “only evil.” Not one trace of good, no gold amidst the dross, no light amidst the darkness—they were “only evil.” And then he adds that word “continually.” What! never any repentance? Never any yearning towards the right? No pure drops of holiness now and then? No, never. “Every imagination” — notice that word. The whole verse is most clear, a besom that sweeps man clean of all boasted good. “Every imagination” — when he was at his best, when he stood at God's altar, when he tried to be right, even then his thoughts had evil in them. Dr. Dick says, “All man's thoughts, all his desires, all his purposes are evil, expressly or by implication; because the subject of them is avowedly sinful, or because they do not proceed from a holy principle, and are not directed to a proper end. It is not occasionally that the human soul is thus under the influence of depravity; but this is its habit and state. It seems impossible to construct a sentence which should more distinctly express its total

corruption than this.” Look at this other passage which is our text; you will see it gives a different phase of the self-same evil, but it does not abate one jot or tittle of it; — it is still “the imagination of man’s heart,” it is still the inward character, the medulla, the pith, the marrow of mankind which God is dealing with. It is not the stream which comes from man that is foul, but the fountain of man, the innermost source of the fountain, — the imagination of his heart is evil: and we are told here what we are not told in the other text, that his thoughts are evil from his youth, that is to say, from his earliest childhood; and it would not be evil from his childhood in every case if there were not certain seeds of evil sown before that, and therefore we can go further, and in the words of holy Scripture, we can confess with sorrowful truthfulness — “Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” From the very earliest imaginable period in which human nature exists it is a defiled, tainted thing, and only worthy of God’s utter abhorrence; and were it not that he smells a sweet savor in the sacrifice of Christ, he would say, as he did say in the sixth chapter, “He repented that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth.”

I have thus brought out distinctly, I hope, before you, this painful fact. It is true both before and after the flood. If you want any proof of its being true now, turn to the scores of passages of scripture which all prove it. I think, however, if our time were limited as it is this morning, I should prefer to mention the third chapter of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. It is the most sweeping description of the universality of human depravity that could possibly have been penned. I will read from the ninth to the nineteenth verse, “What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues have they used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty

before God.” Jonathan Edwards says upon this passage, “If the words which the Apostle uses here (Romans 3:10-19) do not most fully and determinately signify a universality, no words ever used in the Bible, or elsewhere, are sufficient to do it. I might challenge any man to produce any one paragraph in the Scripture, from the beginning to the end, where there is such a repetition and accumulation of terms, so strongly, and emphatically, and carefully to express the most perfect and absolutely universality, or any place to be compared to it. What instance is there in the Scripture, or indeed any other writing when the meaning is only the much greater part, where this meaning is signified in such a manner by repeating such expressions, “They are all,” “they are all,” “they are all-together,” “every one,” “all the world;” joined to multiplied negative terms, to show the universality to be without exception; saying, “There is no flesh,” “there is none, there is none, there is none, there is none,” four times over; besides the addition of “no, not one — no, not one,” once and again ....So that if this matter [universal depravity] be not here set forth plainly, expressly, and fully, it must be because no words can do it; and it is not in the power of language, or any manner of terms and phrases, however contrived and heaped one upon another, determinately to let us remember the confessions of God’s people. You never heard a saint on his knees yet tell the Lord that he had a good nature, that he did not need renewing. Saints, as they grow in grace, are made to feel more and more acutely the evil of their old nature. You will find that those who are most like Christ have the deepest knowledge of their own depravity, and are most humble while they confess their sinfulness. Those men who know not their own hearts may be able to boast, but that is simple ignorance, for if you will take down the biographies of any persons esteemed among us for holiness and for knowledge in the things of God, they will find them frequently crying out under a sense of inward carnality and sin. If I may return to scripture I cannot help quoting David, “Behold I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity.” It is a most villainous thing that some persons try to slander David’s mother, and to suppose that there was something irregular about his birth, which made him speak as he has done, whereas there cannot be the slightest imputation upon that admirable woman. David himself speaks of her with intense respect, and says, “Save the son of thine handmaid” as though he felt it no discredit to be the son of such a woman. She was, doubtless, one of the excellent of the earth, and yet, excellent as she was, it could not but be otherwise that in sin her son was conceived. Let us not at all attempt to escape from the force of what David says. He is using no

hyperbolic expressions; there is no indication of hyperbole throughout the whole Psalm; he is a broken-hearted man on his knees; he is confessing his own sin with Bathsheba, and is not likely either to bring all accusation against his own mother, or to use exaggerated terms. Beloved it is so; we, all of us, the best of us, still have to bear about with us the marks of the unclean thing from which we sprang. Take Paul again — was there ever a man who know more of what sanctity of nature means, or who was brought nearer to the image of Christ, and yet he cries out, “Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death;” and finds no joy, until he can say, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Still I think we have another proof, namely, our own observation, we have lived long enough to observe with our own eyes, and by our reading, that sin is the universal disease of manhood. Is it not certain, according to observation, that man’s heart is evil? They used to tell pretty tales about the charming innocence of men dwelling in the sylvan bowers of primeval forests, untainted by the vices of civilization, unpolluted by the inventions of commerce and art. The woods of America were searched, and no such sweet babes of grace were discovered. The ferocity and cruelty of the Indians justify me in saying that they were hateful and hating one another. The blood-red tomahawk might have been emblazoned as the Red-man’s Coat of arms, and his eyes glaring with revenge, might be taken as the true index of his character. Travellers have penetrated of late into the Centre of Africa, where we may expect to see nature in its primitive excellence, and what is the report that is brought back to us? Why, it is nature in its primitive devilry, that is all. Let such abominable tyrants as Messrs. Grant and Speke describe to us, indicate to us what man is when he is left in his primeval state, untainted by civilization: — he is simply a greater devil, — he is naked and he is not ashamed; in this only is he like our unfallen parents. Again, try the mildest races. There is the mild Hindoo. You look into his gentle face, and you cannot suppose him capable of cruelty. Trust well that mild Hindoo, subdued by British arms so speedily, and so cheerfully bowing his neck to the yoke; but you may as well trust the sleek and cunning tiger from his jungle; let the story of the Sepoy rebellion of a few years ago show us the gentleness of the mild Hindoo; live among the mild Hindoos, and, if you dare read the first chapter of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, remember that it is a decent account of what in ordinary life is practiced among the Hindoos, but which could not be more clearly described, because the mouth of modesty would refuse to speak it, and the

ears of modesty would tingle at the hearing of it. The life of the most respectable Hindoo is tainted with vices too vile to mention. "Yes, but still," says one, "we must look at children, because sin may enter into us through education — let us look at children." Very well, I am willing to look at children, and I am unwilling that anybody should say a word that is harsh or severe against children's nature; but I will say that any man who declares children to be born perfect never was a father; for if he would only watch his own child, not merely when that child has its toys around it and is pleased and happy, but when its little temper is ruffled, he would soon perceive evil nestling there. Your child without evil! — you without eyes, you mean!! If you will only look and listen you will soon discover, if no other fault, this one, "they go astray from the womb; speaking lies," — one of the earliest vices of children which needs to be corrected with most constant and wise rigour is the tendency towards falsehood. It is all very pretty for people to talk about the innocence of children, but I would like them to have to keep one of the nursery schools like those at Manchester, where the children are left while the mothers are at work in the mills, and they would soon discover in their pulling one another's hair, and scratching at one another's eyes, and such like pretty little diversions and innocent freaks, that they are not altogether the sweet babes of innocence they are supposed to be. "Well," says one, "still human nature may have some spiritual good in it. Look at the men who make illustrious the page of history, — look at Socrates, for instance — religion did nothing for Socrates, but yet what a fine character he was." Who told you that? I will venture to say that the philosopher's character would not bear description in a decent assembly. We know from undoubted authority that the purest philosophers at times indulged in bestiality and filth. Solon and Socrates were no exceptions. When infidels hold up these sages as being such patterns of what human nature might become, they have history dead against them.

"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; there is no soundness in it." And this, be it remembered, is without an exception in the long history of humanity, say six thousand years; there is not one that has escaped contamination, not one who has come into the world clean, not one who dares go before his Maker's bar, and say, "Great God, I have never sinned, but have kept thy law from my youth up."



**II.** Now I want you to notice, in the second place, a most extraordinary thing — when I noticed it yesterday I was surprised and overwhelmed with grateful admiration — that is, GOD’S EXTRAORDINARY REASONING.

Good reasoning, but most extraordinary. He says, “I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” Strange logic! In the sixth chapter he said man was evil, and therefore he destroyed him. In the eighth chapter, he says man is evil from his youth, and therefore he will not destroy him. Strange reasoning! Strange reasoning! to be accounted for by the little circumstance in the beginning of the verse, “The Lord smelled a sweet savor.” There was a sacrifice there; that makes all the difference. When God looks on sin apart from sacrifice, Justice says, “Smite! Smite! Curse! Destroy!” But when there is a sacrifice God looks on sin with eyes of mercy, and though Justice says, “Smite,” he says, “No, I have smitten my dear Son; I have smitten him, and will spare the sinner.” Mercy looks to see if she cannot find some loophole, something that she can make into an excuse why she may spare mankind. Is then natural depravity an excuse for sin? Does God use it as such? No, beloved: that our heart is vile is rather an aggravation of the vileness of our action than any excuse for it. Yet there is this one thing, we are born sinners, and God sees there, I will say, a sort of loophole. Rightly upon the terms of Justice, there is no conceivable reason why he should have mercy upon us, but grace makes and invents a reason. O may I be helped, while I try to show you where I think the ground of mercy here lies. Devils fell separately; we have every reason to believe that every fallen angel sinned on his own account, and fell, and it is very likely that on this account there was no possibility, as we know of, of their restoration; every separate fallen spirit was given up for ever to chains, and darkness, and flames of fire. But men! Men did not fall separately and individually. Our case is a somewhat different one from that of fallen angels. We all of us fell without our own consent, without having, in fact, any finger in it actually. We fell federally in our covenant head; it is in consequence of our falling in Adam, that our heart becomes evil from our youth. Now it looks to me as if God’s mercy caught that. He seemed to say, “These my creatures have according to my arrangement of federation, fallen representatively; then I can save them representatively. They perished in one, Adam, I will save them in another. They fell not by their own overt act, though indeed their own overt acts have added to this and deserved my wrath, but their first fall was not through themselves; they

are sinful from their very infancy. Therefore says he "I will deliver them by another as they fell by another." I do not know whether I can make it clear. I do not think that this was any reason before the bar of justice why God should save us, for I believe that he might justly have condemned the whole race of Adam on account of Adam's sin and their own guilt, but I do think that this was a blessed loophole through which his mercy could as it were come fairly to the sons of men, "There," says he, "I made them not distinct individuals but a race; they fell as a race, they shall rise as an elect race. — 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' — 'As by the transgression of one many were made sinners, so by the righteousness of one shall many be made righteous.'" I think you will see the drift of it, then. Man's being sinful, is in the logic of justice, a reason for punishment; man's being sinful from his youth by inheritance from his federal head, becomes through mercy a reason why sovereign grace should light upon men while fallen angels are left to perish for ever. Oh! I bless God that I did not fall first of all myself. I do bless the day now that I fell in Adam, for it may be if I had never fallen in Adam I should have fallen in myself, and then I must have been like fallen angels shut out for ever from the presence of God in the flames of hell. One of the old divines used to say of Adam's sin, "Beata culpa," "Happy fault!" I dare not say that, but in one sense I will say, blessed fall that renders it possible for me to rise! Blessed way of ruin which renders it possible for the blessed way of salvation to be brought about — salvation by substitution, salvation by sacrifice; salvation by a new covenant head, who for us is offered up that God may smell a sweet savor and may deliver us!

I hope nobody will misconstrue what I have said, and make out that I teach that human depravity is an excuse for sin — God forbid! It is only in the eye of grace that it becomes the door of mercy. You know if your child has offended you do not want to chastise him, and yet you feel he deserves it. How you do try, if you are a loving parent, to find some reason why you may let him go. There is no reason, you know that. If you deal with him in terms of justice, there is no reason why having sinned he should not smart for it. But you keep casting about you for an excuse, perhaps it is his mother's birthday, and you let him off for that; or else there was some little circumstance which softened the offense for which you may have him excused. I do not know whether the story is true, but it is said of Queen Victoria when she was just queen-quite a girl — she was asked to sign a death warrant for a person who, by court martial, had been condemned to

die, and she said to the Duke, "Cannot you find any reason why this man should be pardoned?" The Duke said, "No, it was a very great offense, he ought to be punished." "But was he a good soldier?" The Duke said he was a shamefully bad soldier, had always been noted as a bad soldier. "Well, cannot you invent for me any reason?" "Well," he said, "I have every reason to believe from testimony that he was a good man as a man, although a bad soldier." "That will do," she said, and she wrote across it, "pardoned," — not because the man deserved it, but because she wanted a reason for having mercy. So my God seems to look upon man, and after he has looked him through and through and cannot see anything, at last he says, "He is evil from his youth," and he writes "Pardoned." He smells the sweet savor first, and his heart is turned towards the poor rebel; then he turns to him with mercy and blesses him.

**III.** But now, thirdly, by your leave and patience, I shall have to lead you to a few needful inferences from the doctrine of the depravity of man. If the heart be so evil, then it is impossible for us to enter heaven as we are. We cannot suppose that those holy gates shall enclose those whose imaginations and thoughts are evil, only evil continually. No, if that be the place into which shall not enter anything that defileth, then no man being what he was in his first birth can ever stand there. Another step; then it is quite clear that if I am to enter heaven no outward reform will ever do, for if I wash my face, that does not change my heart; and if I give up all my outward sins, and become outwardly what I ought to be, yet still, if it be true that my heart is the villainous thing which Scripture says it is, then my outward reformation cannot touch that, and I am still shut out of heaven; if inside that cup and platter there is all this filthiness, I may cleanse the outside, but I have not touched that which will shut me out of heaven. I go then a little farther, and I observe that I must have a new nature — not new practice only, but a new nature — not new thoughts or new words, but a new nature, so as to become a totally new man. And when I draw the inference, I have Scripture to back me at once, for what says Jesus to Nicodemus? "Ye must be born again." But what is to be born again? To my first birth, I owe all I am by nature; I must get a second birth to which I am to owe all I am as I enter heaven. Multitudes of persons have been saying, "What is Regeneration?" Here they have been writing hundreds of pamphlets, and no two of them agree upon what Regeneration is, except that they say that a man may be regenerated and not converted. Here is an extraordinary thing! an unconverted man who is regenerated! one who is

an enemy to God and yet he has in himself a new nature! has been born again and yet is not converted to God. Oh what a Regeneration that does not convert, a regeneration, in fact, that leaves men just where they were before! But to every babe in Christ the word regenerate is as plain as possible — he wants no definition, no description. “To be born again, why,” says he, “I comprehend that it is to be made over again, a new creature in Christ Jesus. My first birth makes me a creature, my second birth makes me a new creature, and I become what I never was before.” I must remember that what is wanted in me is not to bring out and develop what is good in me, for, according to God’s Word in the sixth of Genesis, there is nothing good, it is evil only. Grace does not enter to educate the germs of holiness within me, for there is no germ of good in man at all, he is “evil continually,” and every imagination is “only evil.” I must then die to sin; my old nature must be slain, it cannot be mended; it is too bad, too rotten to be patched up — that must die; by the death of Jesus it must be destroyed; it must be buried with Christ, and I must rise in resurrection life to conformity with my Lord Jesus. Well then, advancing one step further, it is clear if I must be this before I can enter heaven, that I cannot give myself a new nature. A crab tree cannot transform itself into an apple tree; if I am a wolf I cannot make myself a sheep; water can rise to its own proper level, but it cannot go beyond it without pressure. I must have then, something wrought in me more than I can work in myself, and this indeed is good scriptural doctrine. “That which is born of the flesh” — what is it? When the flesh has done its very best what is it? — “that which is born of the flesh is flesh” — it is filthy to begin with and filth comes of it — only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit — marvel not that I said unto you ye must be born again.”

My soul must come under the hand of the Spirit; just as a piece of clay is on the potter’s wheel and is made to revolve and is touched by the fingers of the potter and moulded into what he wishes it to be, so must I lie passively in the hand of the Spirit of God, and he must work in me to will and to do of his own good pleasure, and then I shall begin to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling, but never, never till then. I must have more than nature can give me, more than my mother gave me, more than my father gave me, more than flesh and blood can produce under the most favorable circumstances. I must have the Spirit of God from heaven. Then comes this inquiry, “Have I received it? What is the best evidence of it?” The best evidence of it is this: Am I resting upon Christ Jesus alone for

salvation? You generally find on potters' vessels that there is a certain mark so that you can know who made them; I want to know whether I am a vessel fit for the Master's use, moulded by his hand, and fashioned by his Spirit. Now, every single vessel that comes out of God's hands has a cross on it. Hast thou the cross on thee? Art thou resting upon Christ's bloody atonement made on Calvary? is he to thy soul thy one rock of refuge-, thy one only hope? Canst thou say this morning: —

*“Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to thee for grace;  
Black, I to the fountain fly,  
Wash me, Savior, or I die?”*

Then, my brother, you have a new heart and a right spirit, you are a new creature in Christ Jesus, for simple faith in Christ is what the old Adam never could attain; a simple faith in Jesus is the great, sure mark of a work of the Holy Spirit in your soul by which you are made to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” Dost thou believe that Jesus is the Christ? Dost thou take him to be God's anointed to thee? Dost thou trust thyself to him to plead for thee, to work for thee, to fulfill the law for thee, to offer atonement for thee? If so, if Jesus is the Christ to thee, thou art born of God. The Spirit which is in thee now will drive out the old nature, slay it utterly, cut it up root and branch, and thou shalt one day bear the image of the heavenly, even as thou hast till now borne the image of the earthly. May God bless these words of mine to your souls' good.

*“Eternal Spirit, we confess  
And sing the wonders of thy grace;  
Thy power conveys our blessings down  
From God the Father and the Son.*

*Enlighten'd by thine heavenly ray,  
Our shades and darkness turn to day;  
Thine inward teachings make us know  
Our danger and our refuge too.*

*Thy power and glory works within,  
And breaks the chains of reigning sin,  
Doth our imperious lusts subdue,  
And forms our wretched hearts anew.*

*The troubled conscience knows thy voice,  
Thy cheering words awake our joys;  
Thy words allay the stormy wind,  
And calm the surges of the mind."*

# THE SPECIAL CALL AND THE UNFAILING RESULT.

NO. 616

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus, Christ our Lord.” — 1 Corinthians 1:9.*

AS I look round upon this large Church, numbering far above two thousand members, my soul is often cast down within me, yea, I am brought into the lowest depths of anxiety. Who is sufficient for these things? To order and distribute its sacred offices aright, to govern with discretion, to exercise discipline with prudence, to hide a strong hand, and to show at all times a loving heart — such thoughts roll in wave after wave till they threaten to overwhelm the mind. And then at last to render unto the Master an account, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed; to be saluted of my God at his coming as a faithful and wise servant who has given to his household meat in due season; to be approved as a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, not having “shunned to declare the whole counsel of God,” as well to those that did forbear as to those that did hear — if such aims do sometimes wind up one’s nerves to extraordinary energy, they verily make the heart palpitate at other times with the fear that haunts, and the solemnity that awes, our soul. Well, well could I be content to renounce so tremendous a charge if it were possible. This, however, is always the most painful qualm that troubles me. Will all these people hold on their way? They have professed to be converted; many of them have come out from the world, and, for several years, their lives have been distinguished by all virtues; these hands have baptized them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and hitherto there appears reasonable evidence that the Spirit of God has set his seal to their being his genuine work, by maintaining them in truth and holiness; but will they persevere? will they

hold on? When the world is so full of temptations, in the midst of this age of sham, when godliness, when true godliness is as much hated as ever it was, and when spiritual religion is as great a mystery as it was to the sages of Areopagus in the days of Paul; will these men and women, especially the younger ones of them, will they all be found faithful, or will they disgrace the cause? will they stain the escutcheon of Christ? will they turn their backs in the day of battle and prove recreant cowards, traitors to our Lord and Master? Such a text as this, then, is refreshing indeed; it comes so softly into one's ear, and breathes such gentle music, because it gives the comfort which just meets the difficulty. Yes, yes, they will hold on their way. There may be some who will go out from us, because they were not of us, for if they were of us, doubtless, they would have continued with us; but still the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." Yes, they shall stand, for God is faithful, who hath called them unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Well, now, dear brethren, have you not the same sort of trouble rising in your own mind? You look within, you think you see what grace has done for you; you feel as you never did feel before conversion. The things you once hated you now love, and what you once loved you now hate. You feel that there has been a radical change in you, one that nature could not effect, and your spirit is very glad in the prospect of what this will all lead to — "the rest which remaineth for the people of God," and the crown of everlasting life that fadeth not away. But here comes in this awkward "but;" you see so much corruption within, you feel so much weakness which aids and abets this corruption; you foresee so many trials awaiting you, that the pale shadow of despondency falls on your heart, and fitful doubts and questionings vex your brain. You have no sooner overcome one adversary than you are attacked by another, and sometimes the evil spirit howls in your ear, "God has forsaken you, now it is all over with you;" and you are ready to lie down and die in despair, saying, "I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy; I shall never see his face with joy." To you also my text comes like a whisper from heaven — "God is faithful," who hath called you "unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ."

My drift this evening will be, while reminding you of your calling and of your fellowship, to comfort your hearts with regard to your perseverance. He is able to confirm and keep you even to the end, and he will do it; he will present you blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ for this very reason, that he has called you to fellowship with him. What shall we say,



then? First, I want to refresh your memories with your calling; secondly, I want to make you exercise your fellowship; and, thirdly, I want you to perceive your security.

**I. Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, LET ME REFRESH YOUR MEMORIES WITH YOUR CALLING.**

Was there not a day, the mementoes of which you fondly cherish, when you were called from death unto life? Fly back now to the day and hour if you can, and, if not, light upon the season thereabouts, when the great transaction took place, in which you were made Christ's for ever, by the voluntary surrender of yourself to him. In looking back, does it not strike you that your calling must have been of divine origin? The text says, "God called you" — does not your experience prove the same? We thought peradventure, as the season transpired, that we had had no other call than that which came in the word that was addressed to us through our godly parents, through our Bibles, through the good books that we read; yet we perceive, in looking back, as the crisis passes before us in review, that none of these things ever could have produced the effect which has been taking place in us. Did we not read the same books years before? but they never touched a chord in our hearts; we listened to the same minstrel, it may be, scores of times; but he never could strike a spark into our dark natures; we had our convictions before this, but they were the mere disquietudes of natural conscience, which died away like the morning's hoar frost, when the sun rises and scatters it all; therefore we conclude that this time it must have been something special, and we think every man that has experienced it will say at once, "Yes, I see the finger of God in this; I am absolutely certain it was not moral suasion; it was not the oratory of the preacher; it was not the earnestness even of my pleading teacher or friend, but the hand of God as clear in my conversion as in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And, being so, beloved, do you not notice at once how irresistible that call was? Oh, we had been called scores of times before, but we always turned a deaf ear. I do protest that I had been dragged to the cross of Christ before, and yet I would not go. It was with me as the old proverb hath it, "One man may lead a horse to the water, but twenty cannot make him drink." How many times was I lead to the water, brought to the foot of the cross, pointed to Christ, pleaded with to look to him, urged to put my trust in him, but I would not, — I preferred the things of this world, and I would fain have followed the devices of my own heart, my own willingness, and doings, and judgments, rather than yield to the will,

and wisdom, and kindness of God. But when this particular call came, did you struggle against it? Perhaps you did, but you had more than your match. Oh, the divine influence, when you threw down your sword and said, "Great God, I yield; I know not how it is, but I feel sweet yearnings within; my soul relents; I can be thine enemy no more; thy love hath smitten me and made me powerless to resist. Thou hast whispered something in my ear; I know not how thou didst it, but 'tis there, and I surrender at discretion. Do what thou wilt with me, only give me to know thyself, that I may be saved."

How gracious that calling must have been since it came to you from God; came to you irresistibly, and came to you with such personal demonstration! What grace was here! What was there in you to suggest a motive why God should call you? Oh, beloved, we can hardly ask you that question without the tear rising in our own eye.

*"What was there in us that could merit esteem,  
Or give the Creator delight?  
'Twas 'Even so, Father!' we ever must sing,  
'Because it seemed good in thy sight.'"*

Some of you were drunkards, were profane, were injurious. Many of you cared neither for God nor man. How often have you mocked at God's word! How frequently have you despised God's ministers! How constantly has the holy name of the Most High been used in a flippant, if not in a profane manner by you! and yet for all that, he fixed his eye upon you and would not withdraw it; and when you spurned the grace that would have saved you, still he followed you, determined to save, till at last, in the appointed time, he got the grasp of you and would not let you go until he had made you his friend, turned your heart to love him, and made your spirit obedient to his grace. I think, throughout eternity, if we had this problem to solve, why did he call me, we should still go on making wrong guesses, but we never could arrive at the right conclusion, unless we should say, once for all, I do not know. He did as he willed. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. He will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. And here let me say, if these things be so, oh, should not this calling of ours to-night evoke our most intense gratitude, our most earnest love? Oh, if he had not called thee, where hadst thou been tonight? Thou shalt sit to-night at the Lord's table: where wouldst thou have been but for grace? To repeat the old saying of John Bradford, when he saw a cartful of men going off to Tyburn to be hanged, "There goes John

Bradford but for the grace of God.” When you see the swearer in the street, or the drunkard rolling home at night, there are you, there am I, but for the grace of God. Who am I — what should I have been if the Lord, in mercy, had not stopped me in my mad career! I know there are some of us who can remember the old story of Rowland Hill, when a good Scotchman called to see him, and without saying a word, sat still for some five minutes, looking into the good old gentleman’s face. At last, Rowland Hill asked him what engaged his attention. Said he, “I was looking at the lines of your face.” Well, what do you make out of them? “Why,” said he, “that if the grace of God hadn’t been in you, you would have been the biggest rascal living;” and some of us do feel just that, that if it had not been for the grace of God we should have been out-and-out ringleaders in every kind of infamy and sin. I know for myself I can never do things by halves. If I had served Baal I would have built him an altar, and made victims smoke upon it day and night; and if we serve God zealously and earnestly, we have the more reason to be humble and to lay low in the dust; for that very zeal of spirit would have been turned to the very worst account unless grace had been pleased to transform us. Why, there are some people in the world that seem too insipid to do any good or hurt, and they have reason to be thankful if they are converted, but still not that reason that others have, who, if they did mischief, would do it with both hands, and if they do anything for God, must do it with all their might. This was a kind and gracious call, when we consider what we might have been.

Stand up now, believer, and look at this, and remember the grace of this call when thou considerest what thou art. Why man, to-night, what art thou? A pardoned sinner — not a sin against thee in God’s book. What art thou? — A justified person; the righteousness of Christ girds thee; even the eye of God cannot see a spot in thee. Thou art in Christ all fair; there is no spot in thee — justified freely by his grace — roll that thought under thy tongue as a sweet morsel. What art thou to-night? Thou art a son of God, an adopted heir of heaven, joint heir with Christ; thou art accepted in the beloved and very precious to Jehovah himself. What art thou? Thou art an heir of immortality. Heaven is thy certain inheritance. Oh, I wish you could believe this. You that are Christians, and know this to be true, I wish you could realize it, that within ten minutes you may be in heaven with Christ, and that within a few years you will be there, that eternal life is yours — not may be, perhaps, but is, yours to-night, and you have but to heave one gentle sigh and the dust is left behind, and the spirit waves the palm and

wears the crown, and sings the eternal hymn before the throne of God. God hath called us; let us look back upon the time of our calling, and if some such thoughts as these should rise in our minds, they will not be unprofitable. They will fill your souls with grateful joy in retracing the steps by which you have been led; they will put courage into your souls in realizing the grace by which you now stand; they will clear the mist from your eyes in looking forward with cheerful hope to the future. Methinks they will prompt you to take your harp down from the willows and touch the strings with melodious song.

*“Every fallen soul, by sinning,  
Merits everlasting pain;  
But thy love, without beginning,  
Has restored thy sons again;*

*Countless millions  
Shall in life, through Jesus, reign.  
Pause, my soul! adore, and wonder!  
Ask, ‘O why such love to me?’*

*Grace hath put me in the number  
Of the Savior’s family: Hallelujah!  
Thanks, eternal thanks, to thee!”*

**II.** To what end, or for what purpose did God call you? He called you, as we had it this morning that you might receive Christ and walk in him, or, as the text has it, that you might have fellowship with Christ. Now the word “fellowship,” [koinonia] is not properly to be interpreted here as a society, but as the result of society; that is to say, fellowship lies in mutual and identical interests. A man and his wife have fellowship with each other, in that which is common to both and enjoyed in communion accordingly. All their possessions are joint possessions; they are kinn’d together in love; and, if the wife hath anything, it is the husband’s, and the husband, in his love, thinketh all that he hath to be his wife’s. Now, when we were called to Christ, we were called to have fellowship with him of this peculiar kind, that we became relatively and absolutely identical with Christ. We were made one with him, so that everything Christ had became ours. This was the act of faith, to let us take hold of what Christ had; and this is the result of faith, to give us Christ and to give us to Christ, so that we are in kinship together and make one person, Christ the head and we the members. Now we have a unity to Christ, a fellowship to Christ, first in his loves. What

Christ loves we love. He loves the saints—so do we. He loves sinners — so do we. He loves the world and pants to see it transformed into the garden of the Lord — so do we. Whatever Christ loves, our heart loves, for our heart and Christ’s heart are welded together, put into the same furnace and then made into one, so that what he loves we love, and what he hates and detests and abhors, we also deprecate and loathe. Then we are one with Christ in his desires. Doth Christ desire anything? — so do we. He desires to see multitudes saved — so do we. He desires the glory of God — we also labor for the same. He desires that the saints may be with him where he is — we desire to be with him there too. He desires to drive out sin — behold we fight under his banner. He desires that his Father’s name may be loved and adored by all his creatures — we pray daily, “Let thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven.” We are called then, to a fellowship with Christ in having the same loves and the same desires; so too in our measure we have the same sufferings. We are not nailed to the cross, nor do we die a bloody death; Yet many of our compeers that have gone before have done so, and if it ever came to that, there are millions of as true hearts as ever became sacrifices to God still in England. But when he is reproached, we are reproached, and we have learned to bear his reproach too; and a very sweet thing it is to be blamed for Christ’s sake, to be despised for following the Master, to have the wits of the world against us — ’tis well, ’tis well. It was so with him. The servant would not be above his master, nor the disciple above his Lord. Some few drops of his cup we drink, and they are but few; and yet it has been given to some more than to others to “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body’s sake, which is the Church. And, beloved, we have also fellowship with Christ in his joys as well as in his trials. Is he happy; we are happy to think Christ is happy. I do not know whether you have ever drank that joy, believer, but I have found it a very sweet joy to be joyful because Christ is joyful. You may have known some friend, perhaps, who had another dear friend, and he saw that friend prospering in the world; he did not get on himself as he could wish, he was sickly, he was often low in spirit; somehow, as often as ever he saw his friend, marked his prosperity, saw his happy wife and smiling children, he said, “It always makes me happy to think how you prosper.” There was true friendship here. Now between Christ and his people there is such love, that if Christ is crowned, never mind where I am, if God also hath highly exalted him, what matters it, what matters it, even though he crush me in the very dust? I think a man must undergo some overwhelming trouble

before he can lay hold on this as a comfort; but if he can once get it, from my own experience I bear witness, there is no sweeter, more thrilling delight to be known this side of heaven than that of having Christ's joy fulfilled in us that our joy may be full. Oh! see him rise! see him crowned! hear the songs of angels! mark the terror of devils! know that his name is high over all in heaven and earth and sky, and you will feel, "Well, well, all these things that I have to suffer are just nothing. It does not signify; it is all well, Christ is exalted and I am perfectly content." This is to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nor does the fellowship end here; nor is it possible to-night to go through the whole of it, for our fellowship with Christ leads us to be partakers of all his riches. Whatever Christ has, belongs to us. If he has riches in pardoning, supporting, instructing, illuminating, sanctifying, preserving or perfecting Christians, they are all ours. Is his blood precious? It is mine. Is his righteousness complete? It is mine. Are his merits sweet? They are mine. Has he power in intercession? It is mine. Has he wisdom, righteousness — has he anything? It is mine. The father hath called us to have fellowship with Christ, and to be partakers in all he has. So is it with all his glory. There is not a crown he wears but we have part of it; nay, there is not a gem that sparkles in a crown he wears but it sparkles for us as well as for him. For us the golden streets; for us the chariot in which he rides along them; for us the crowding angels; for us the joyous acclamations; for us those chords of music; for us the shout of "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed the saints unto God by thy blood;" for us the second advent with all its splendours; for us the universal reign of Christ, the gathered sceptres and the congregated crowns; for us the day of judgment, with the reeling columns of the sky, and the rocks dissolved before the heat of the blast of his anger; for us the angels as they gather up the righteous, and even for us the triumph of the Lord, when with shout of archangel he shall destroy his adversaries with the breath of his nostrils for ever. There is nothing to come in scripture, or in all the prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled when Christ shall come; there is nothing anywhere to be revealed concerning Christ, but what is ours, since our fellowship is with him.

And all this, brethren, leads to practical spiritual fellowship with Christ. I do hope you that are in Christ, will strive to-night to realize that you are in him. Come now, I am not trying to preach now, I want to talk this over with you. If thou believest thou art in Christ thou art one with him to-night;

say then to thy soul, “Thou art one with Christ even now. In thyself thou art everything that is vile, but in him thou art nothing of the sort. My soul, to-night thou art strong and rich, and blessedly perfect. In him thou art in heaven. In him there is nothing to taunt thee, nothing to accuse thee, much less any thing to condemn thee.” Come, put on thy silver sandals, daughter of Zion; wrap thyself now in thy scarlet and fine linen, which thy Lord hath bought for thee; come thou with him up to the mountain and sit with him awhile, “Far from this world of grief and sin,” and let him speak to thee while he tells thee, “Thou art mine and I am thine.” Then will you be able to say, “Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

**III.** Now we conclude by noticing the third point in two or three words. All this leads us to perceive our security. Saints must be saved — it cannot be otherwise — for two reasons, first, because God has called them. Now the gifts and calling of God are, according to scripture, “without repentance,” that is to say, if he has once called a man, he never sends him back again. What! give me quickening grace and let me die after it! Give me to taste the joys of the Spirit and yet take them away from my lips for ever! Why this were unheard of cruelty. For God to destroy the guilty in hell is just, but, I venture to say, that for God to give spiritual enjoyments, the intense, the unutterable intense delights of spiritual enjoyment, and not intend that the person should always enjoy these, to take them away for ever, would be to put a sting into hell which I cannot conceive of, because he is faithful in all his ways and righteous in all his judgments. Nay, let the sinner bear his guilt, but do not add the unnecessary torment of letting him first of all know the hope of eternal life and then find himself disappointed. Doth God play fast and loose? Doth he give and then take back again? Doth he make us nobles and then degrade us into beggars? Doth he put crowns on our heads and then slay us? Doth he make us his children and then cast us out of the family? God forbid! these were unheard of things for a God to do. God is faithful who has called you. Having called you, he has justified you, having justified you he will glorify you.

Then, again, there is another reason why you are saved. He has called you into fellowship with Christ, and that fellowship, if God be faithful, must be complete. You have shared his sufferings, you have had to bear a part of his reproach; his faithfulness secures the rest. He is “the strength,” yea, the eternity of Israel; “he is not a man that he should repent.” Pronounce his name with reverence: it hath in it more virtue than ten thousand material

pledges. He is God: therefore he will maintain the fellowship all the way through. Am I to bear the cross and not to wear the crown? Am I to come as a guilty sinner and have fellowship in his blood and yet not have fellowship in the heaven into which, by that blood, he entered as my representative? Am I to come and trust to Christ and have fellowship in the merit of that dying Savior and yet have no fellowship in his living power?

Am I to-day by faith to be in fellowship with him and never by sight to have the same? Oh this were strange, oh this were two modes of acting, sowing divers seeds, this were having mixed weights in the bag. God acts on one principle, not on two, and where he calls us to be his sons and to be partners with Christ, he will carry out the deed of partnership and we shall see his face and we shall wear his crown and we shall sit upon his throne, and that shall come by-and-bye. Therefore, courage, brothers and sisters, and let us rejoice to-night while we come to the table that we are secure for God has called us — we must be saved for we have fellowship with Christ.

Now I have been preaching only to the people of God, and there is a large number of my hearers that are not of this happy family. I would I were preaching to them also; but the time has fled. Let me say this word of encouragement to them, the grace that called us can call you. You cannot save yourself, but he can save you, and here is a promise which he gives you, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” To call upon that name is to invoke it in prayer; venture upon it in fact, and trust it by faith. If you believe in Christ, you shall be saved. I know not who you may be; to every creature under heaven the same gospel is preached, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou” — I know not to whom that refers just now — “thou”-though thou be the vilest sinner living — “thou shalt be saved.” Trust Christ now and your sins are gone; rest on him and you are snatched from the kingdom of evil and put into the republic of life; you become members of Christ’s body, you are saved —

*“Oh, believe the message true,  
God to you his Son has given.”*

Cast yourself upon him; trust his grace, and heaven is yours for ever. The Lord add his blessing now for Christ’s sake. Amen.



# CHRIST OUR LIFE-SOON TO APPEAR.

NO. 617

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 26TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” — Colossians 3:4.*

MY discourse on Sabbath mornings is very frequently the gathering up of the thoughts and experiences of the week — a handful of barley which I have gleaned among the sheaves; but I could not thrust upon you this morning the poverty-stricken productions of my own insufferable dullness of brain, weariness of heart, and sickness of spirit during this week, for this were a sure method of making you partakers of my misery. I have wandered through a wilderness, but I will not scatter handfuls of the hot sand among you. I have traversed the valley of the shadow of death, but I will not repeat the howlings of Apollyon. This day of rest is appointed for a far better purpose.

Scarcely knowing how to fulfill the appointed service of this morning, I sit me down and remember the ancient minstrel, who, when the genius of song had for a time departed from him, was nevertheless called upon to discourse sweet music. What could he do but day his fingers among the strings of his harp, and begin some old accustomed strain. His fingers, and his lips moved at first mechanically; the first few stanzas dropped from him from mere force of habit, and fell like stones without life or power, but by and by, he struck a string which woke the echoes of his soul, a note fell on his heart like a blazing torch, and the smouldering fire within his soul suddenly flamed up; the heaven-born muse was with him, and he sang as in his better times. So may it be my happy lot this morning: placing my fingers

on the strings which know so well the name of Jesus, and beginning to discourse upon a theme which so constantly has made these walls to ring, although at first insipid periods try your patient ears, yet shall they nevertheless lead to something that may kindle in you hope, and joy, and love, if not rapture and delight. O for the wings of eagles to bear our souls upward towards the throne of our God. Already my heart warms with the expectation of a blessing! Does the earth feel the rising of the sun before the first bright beams gild the east? Are there not sharp-witted birds, which know within themselves that the sunbeams are on the road, and therefore begin right joyously to wake up their fellows to tell them that the morning cometh leaping over the hills? Certain hopeful, joyful thoughts have entered within our heart, prophetic of the Comforter's divine appearing, to make glad our souls. Does not the whole earth prophecy the coming of the happy days of spring? There are certain little bulbs that swell, and flowers that peep from under the black mould, and say, "We know what others do not know, that the summer's coming, coming very soon;" and surely there are rising hopes within us this morning, which show their golden flowers above our heaviness, and assure us with joyful accents, that Christ is coming to cheer our heart yet again. Believer, you shall once again behold his comfortable presence; you shall no longer cry unto him out of the depths, but your soul shall lean upon his arm, and drink deep of his love. Beloved, I proceed in the hope that the gracious Lord will favor his most unworthy servant, and in his own mercy fulfill our best expectations.

Our text is a very simple one, and bears upon its surface four thoughts; namely, that Christ is our life; that, secondly, Christ is hidden, and so is our life; that, thirdly, Christ will one day appear; and, fourthly, that when he appeareth we also shall appear with him in glory.

**I.** The first most precious and experimental doctrine lies in these words, "CHRIST WHO IS OUR LIFE."

We hardly realize that we are reading in Colossians when we meet with this marvellously rich expression. It is so like John's way of talking. See his opening words in his gospel, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Remember how he reports the words at Lazarus' tomb, "I am the resurrection and the life." How familiarly he speaks of the Lord Jesus under the same character in his first epistle: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for

the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." How close John cleaves to Jesus! He does not say, as the preacher of this morning will — Christ is the food of our life, and the joy of our life, and the object of our life, and so on, no, but "Christ is our life." I think that Peter or James would have said, "He is the strength or guide of our life," but John must needs put his head right into the Savior's bosom, he cannot talk at a distance, or whisper from a second seat, but his head must go sweetly down upon the Savior's heaving bosom; he must feel himself in the closest, nearest possible contact with his Lord; and so he puts it, "The life was manifested," getting to the very pith and marrow of it at once. Paul has somewhat of the same loving spirit, and if not entitled to be called "that disciple whom Jesus loved," the angel might well have addressed him as he did Daniel, "O man, greatly beloved." Hence, you see, he leaps at once into the depths of the truth, and delights to dive in it. Whereas others, like the Israelites, stand outside the bound which surrounds the mount, he, like Moses, enters into the place where God is, and beholds the excellent glory. We, I fear, must compass this holy truth round about, before we can fully enter into it. Blessed is it to wait at the doors of such a truth, though better far to enter in. Let it be understood that it is not natural but spiritual life of which the text treats, and then we shall not mislead the ignorant.

**1.** Christ is the source of our life. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." Our Lord's own words are — "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." Four verities, as if to show the importance of the truth here taught to us. We are dead in sin. That same voice which brought Lazarus out of the tomb, brings us out of our grave of sin. We hear the Word of God, and we live according to the promise — "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Ephesians 5:14.) Jesus is our Alpha, as well as our Omega: he is the Author of our faith, as well as its finisher. We should have been to this day dead in trespasses and sins, if it had not been said, "And you hath he quickened." It is by his life that we

live; he gives us the living water, which is in us a well or water springing up unto everlasting life.

## **2. Christ is the substance of our spiritual life.**

What is life? The physician cannot discover it; the anatomist hunts in vain for it, through flesh, and nerve, and brain. Be quick, sir! with that scalpel of yours; “life’s just departed,” men say; cut quick to the heart, and see if you cannot find, at least, some lingering footprint of the departed thing called life. Subtle anatomist, what hast thou found? Look at that brain — what canst thou see there but a certain quantity of matter strangely fashioned? Canst thou discover what is life? It is true that somewhere in that brain and in that spinal cord it dwells, and that heart with its perpetual pumpings and heavings has something or other to do with it, but where is the substance, the real substance of the thing called life? Ariel’s wings cannot pursue it — it is too subtle. Thought knows it but cannot grasp it; knows it from its being like itself, but cannot give a picture of it, nor represent what it is. In the new nature of the Christian there is much mystery, but there is none as to what is its life; if you could cut into the center of the renewed heart you would find sure footprints of divine life, for you would find love to Jesus, nay, you would find Christ himself there. If you walk in search of the springs of the sea of the new nature, you will find the Lord Jesus at the fount of all. “All my springs are in thee,” said David. Christ creates the life-throbs of the believer’s soul, he sends the life-floods through the man according to his own will. If you could penetrate the brain of the believer you would find Christ to be the central thought moving every other thought, and causing every other thought to take root and grow out of itself; you would find Christ to be the true substance of the inner life of the spiritual nature of every soul quickened by the breath of heaven’s life.

## **3. Christ is the sustenance of our life. What can the Christian feed upon but Jesus’ flesh and blood? As to his natural life he needs bread, but as to his spiritual life, of which alone we are now speaking, he has learned that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live.” “This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” We cannot live on the sand of the wilderness, we want the manna which drops from on high; our skin bottles of creature**

confidence cannot yield us a drop of moisture, but we drink of the rock which follows us, and that rock is Christ. O wayworn pilgrims in this wilderness of sin, you never do get a morsel, much less a meal, to satisfy the craving hunger of your spirits, except ye find it in Christ Jesus. When you feed on him your soul can sing, "He hath satisfied my mouth with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's," but if you have him not, your bursting wine vat and your well filled barn can give you no sort of satisfaction; rather you lament over them in the words of wisdom, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" O how true are Jesus' own words, For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

Christ is the solace of our life. Noah's ark had but one window, and we must not expect more. Jesus is the only window which lets light into the Christian's spirit when he is under sharp affliction. Kirke White's picture of his midnight voyage, when one star alone of all the train could guide the mariner's foundering bark to the port of peace, is a faint but truthful representation of the Christian's life in its hour of peril. Paul says that during his disastrous voyage "neither sun nor stars for many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on them, and all hope that they should be saved was taken away, but then, just then, the angel of God stood at his side;" and even so will the Lord Jesus appear to his saints in their extremities, and be their joy and safety. And, brethren, if Christ appear, what mattereth it where we are?

*'Midst darkest shades if he appear  
My dawning is begun;  
He is my soul's bright morning star,  
And he my rising sun.'*

Do not talk of poverty! Our tents are the curtains of Solomon, and not the smoke-dried skins of Kedar, when Christ is present. Speak not of want! There are all manner of precious fruits laid up for my beloved when he cometh into my cot. Speak not of sickness! my soul is no longer sick except it be of love, but full of holy health when once the sun of righteousness hath risen with healing beneath his wings. Christ is the very soul of my soul's life. His loving kindness is better than life! There is nothing in life worth living for but Christ. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee!" The rest is

mere skim milk and curds fit to be given to the swine, but Christ is the cream; all else is but the husk and bran, and coarse gritty meal, the Lord Jesus is the pure flour. All that remaineth is the chaff; fan it, and the wind shall carry it away, or the fire shall burn it, and little shall be the loss; Christ is the golden grain, the only thing worth having. Life's true life, the true heart's blood, the innermost fount of life is in Jesus.

To the true Christian, Christ is the object of his life. As speeds the ship towards the port, so hastes the believer towards the haven of his Savior's bosom. As flies the arrow to its goal, so flies the Christian towards the perfecting of his fellowship with Christ Jesus. As the soldier fights for his captain, and is crowned in his captain's victory, so the believer contends for Christ, and gets his triumph out of the triumphs of his Master. "For him to live is Christ;" — at least, it is this he seeks after, and counts that all life apart from this is merely death in another form. That wicked flesh of his, that cumbrous clay, those many temptations, that Satanic trinity or the world, the flesh, and the devil, all these mar his outward actions; but if he could be what he would be, he would stand like the bullock at Christ's altar to be slaughtered, or march forward like a bullock in Christ's furrow to plough the blood-bought field. He desires that he may not have a hair of his head unconsecrated, nor heave one breath which is not for his Savior, nor speak one word which is not for the glory of his Lord. His heart's ambition is to live so long as he can glorify Christ better on earth than in heaven, and to be taken up when it shall be better for him and more honorable for his Master that he should be with Jesus where he is. As the river seeks the sea, so, Jesus, seek I thee! O let me find thee and melt my life into thine for ever!

It follows from all this, that Christ is the exemplar of our life. A Christian lays the life of Christ before him as the schoolboy puts his copy at the top of the page, and he tries to draw each line, down-stroke and up-stroke, according to the handwriting of Christ Jesus. He has the portrait of Christ before him as the artist has in his studio his Greek sculptures, busts and torsos; he knows that there is all the true anatomy of virtue in Christ. If he wants to study life, he studies from Christ; or, if he would closely learn the beauties of the antique, he studies from the Savior, for Christ is ancient and modern, antique and living too, and therefore God's artists in their life-sculpture keep to the Savior, and count that if they imitate every vein, and fetch out every muscle of their great copy, they shall then have produced the perfection of manhood. I would give nothing for your religion if you do

not seek to be like Christ; where there is the same life within, there will, there must be, to a great extent, the same developments without. I have heard it said, and I think I have sometimes noticed it, that husbands and wives who are truly knit together in near and dear conjugal affection, grow somewhat like each other in expression, if not in feature. This I well know, that in the heart is truly wedded to the Lord Jesus, and lives in near fellowship with him, it must grow like him. Grace is the light, our loving heart is the sensitive plate, Jesus is the person who fills the lens of our soul, and soon a heavenly photograph of his character is produced. There will be a similarity of spirit, temper, motive, and action; it will not be manifest merely in great things but in little matters too, for even our speech will bewray us.

Thus you see after all, I have only been wading along the banks, or at best conducting you up to the knees in the gently flowing stream of my text. Experience must lead you further, for there is a great deep here; Paul could perceive it, for he does not say as I have been saying "Jesus is the source of our life, the substance of our life, the solace of our life, the object of our life, the exemplar of our life;" but he says, "Christ is our life," and so he is indeed. Just as we have a natural life of which we know so little, so we have a spiritual life which is more mysterious far, and of that we know beyond its effects and operations little more than this, that Christ is that life, that when we get Christ we have eternal life, that if we have life it is only because we have Christ in us, the hope of glory.

I must pause a minute here, just to say that what is true concerning our spiritual life now, is equally true of our spiritual life in heaven. Different as are the circumstances of the life in heaven and the life on earth, yet as to real essence there is only one life in both places. Saints in heaven live by precisely the same life which makes them live here. Spiritual life in the kingdom of grace and in the kingdom of glory is the same, only here it is uneducated spiritual life, there it is educated and trained; here it is undeveloped, it is the babe, the child, there it is developed, manifested, perfected; but in very deed the life is precisely the same. Saints need not to be born again after once being regenerate. You who have been born again, have now within you the life which will last on throughout eternity; you have the very same vital spark of heavenly flame which will burn in glory, world without end.

It will be no digression if we here remark, that as we have eternal life in having Christ, this marks our dignity. “Christ our life!” Why, this cannot be said of princes or kings! What is their life? Talk of blue blood and pedigree, and so on, here is something more, here is God’s own Son, our life! You cannot say this of angels. Bright spirits! your songs are sweet and your lives are happy, but Christ is not your life! Nay this cannot be asserted of archangels. Gabriel! thou mayest bend thyself before God’s throne, and worship him in praise too high for me, but thou canst not boast what I can surely claim, that Christ is my life! Even those mysterious presence — angels of whom we read in Ezekiel and Revelation, called the four living creatures, though they seem to bear up the moving throne of deity, creatures who appear to be an embodiment of divine power and glory, yet even of these it is not written that Christ is their life. Herein men, redeemed, elect, favored men rise to a supernatural light, for they can say what no spirits but those redeemed by blood may venture to assert, “Christ is our life.” Does not this account for Christian holiness? How can a man live in sin if Christ is his life? Jesus dwell in him and he continue in sin? Impossible! Can he sin without his life? He must do so if he sins, because Christ cannot sin, and Christ is his life. Why, if I see the saint never so self-denying, never so zealous, never so earnest, never so like his Lord, it is no wonder now, when I understand that Christ is his life.

See how secure the Christian is. No dagger can reach his life, for it is hidden beyond the skies. No temptation, no hellish blast, no exhalation from the Stygian pits of temptation can ever with burning fever or chill consumption waste the life of the Christian spiritually. No, it is bid with Christ, it is Christ, and unless Christ dies, the Christian’s life dies not. Oh how safe, how honored, how happy is the Christian!

But we may not linger longer, time warns us to proceed. There is much more than ever we shall be able to bring out. Let down your buckets, here is a deep well; I hope you have something to draw with. You that have life within have. You that have not, may look down the well and see the darkness, or the reflection of the water, but you cannot reach the cooling flood. It is only you who can draw, who can know the excellence of this living water. I pray the Lord help you to drink to the full and draw again, for there is no fear of ever draining the inexhaustible fullness of this deep truth of God.



## II. Now, as our Lord Jesus has not yet appeared in his glory, OUR LIFE IS THEREFORE HIDDEN.

“The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God,” but as yet they are unknown and unmanifested. The major part of the believer’s life is not seen at all, and never can be by the unspiritual eye. Where is Christ? To the worldling at the present moment there is no such person as Christ, he says, “I cannot see him, touch him, hear him. He is beyond all cognizance of my senses, I do not believe in him.” Just such is spiritual life to the unbeliever. You must not expect because you are a Christian that unbelievers will begin to admire you, and say, “What a mystery! This man has a new life in him, what an admirable thing, what a desirable possession, we wish we partook of the game.” Nothing of the kind. They do not know that you have such a life at all. They can see your outward actions, but your inward life is quite out of reach of their observation. Christ is in heaven to-day, he is full of joy; but the world does not know his joy; no worldly heart is boasting and rejoicing because Christ is glad in heaven. Christ to-day is pleading before the Father’s throne, but the world does not see Christ’s engagements; Christ’s occupations are all hidden from carnal eyes. Christ at this present moment reigns, and has power in heaven, and earth, and hell; but what does the worldly man see of it? Jesus has fellowship with all his saints every-where, but what does the ungodly discern? I might stand and preach until midnight concerning my Lord, but all that men who are unconverted would gain would be to hear what I have to tell, and then to say, “Perhaps it is true,” but they could not possibly discern it, the thing is beyond the cognizance of sense. So is our spiritual life. Beloved, you may reign over sin, but the sinner does not comprehend your being a king. You may officiate as a priest before God, but the ungodly man does not perceive your priesthood and your worship. Do not expect him to do so; your labor is lost if you try by any way to introduce him to these mysteries, except by the same door through which you came yourself. I never try to teach a horse astronomy; and to teach an unconverted man spiritual experience would be a folly of the same sort. The man who knows nothing of our inner life takes up “Pilgrim’s Progress,” and he says, “Yes, it is a very wonderful allegory.” It is, sir, but unrenewed minds know nothing about it. When we have sometimes read explanations of the Pilgrim’s Progress, we could not but detect that the writer of the explanation had need to have had it explained to himself; he could describe the shell, but the kernel of the nut was far

beyond his reach; he had not learned to crack the shell, and to feed upon the meat. Now it must be so, it must be so, if Christ is our life; Christ has gone away and cannot be seen; it must be so that the Greater proportion of the spiritual life must be for ever a secret, to all but spiritual men. But, then there is a part which men do see, and that I may liken to Christ when he was on earth: Christ seen of men and angels. What did the world do with Christ as soon as they saw him? Set, him in the chair of state and fall down and worship his absolute perfection? No, not they: "He was despised and rejected of men, a man; of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Outside of the camp was his place; cross-bearing was for him the occupation, not of one day, but of every day. Did the world yield him solace and rest? Foxes, ye have your holes, ye birds of the air, ye have your nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head. Earth could afford him no bed, no house, no shelter; at last it cast him out for death, and crucifies him, and then would have denied him a tomb, if one of his disciples had not begged his body. Such you must expect to be the lot of the part of your spiritual life which men can see; as soon as they see it to be spiritual life, they will treat it as they treated the Savior. They will despise it, "Sure!" say they, "pretty fancies, fine airs, nice ideas." You expect them to give you comfort, do you — worldlings to give, you comfort! Do you think that Christ will have anywhere to lay his head in this world to-day any more than he had one thousand eight hundred years ago? You go about to find what God gives the foxes and the birds, but what he never meant to give to you in this world, a place whereon to lay your head. Your place to lay your head is up yonder on your Savior's bosom, but not here. You dream that men will admire you, that the more holy you are and the more Christlike you are, the more peaceable people will be towards you. My dear friends, you do not know what you are driving at. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" I believe if we were more like Christ we should be much more loved by his friends, and much more hated by his enemies. I do not believe the world would be half so lenient to the Church, now-a-days, if it were not that the Church has grown complacent to the world. When any of us speak up boldly, mercenary motives are imputed to us, our language is turned upside down, and we are abhorred of men. We get smooth things, brethren, because I am afraid we are too much like the prophets who prophesied peace, peace, where there was no peace. Let us be true to our Master, stand out and come out and be like him, and we must expect the

same treatment which he had; and if we receive it we can only say, This is what I expected;

*“Tis, no surprising, thing  
That we should be unknown;  
The Jewish world knew not their king,  
God’s everlasting Son,”*

**III.** CHRIST WILL APPEAR. The text speaks of it as a fact to be taken, for granted. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear.” It is not a matter of question in the Christian church whether Christ will appear or not. Has not Christ appeared once? Yes, after a certain sort. I remember reading a quaint expression of some old divine, that the book of Revelation might quite as well be called an Obvelation, for it was rather a hiding than a revealing of things to come. So, when Jesus came it was hardly a revealing, it was a hiding of our Lord. It is true that he was “manifest in the flesh,” but it is equally true that the flesh shrouded and concealed his glory. The first manifestation was very partial; it was Christ seen through a glass, Christ in the mist of grief, and the cloud of humiliation. Christ is yet to appear in the strong sense of the word “appearing;” he is to come out and shine forth. He is to leave the robes of scorn and shame behind, and to come in the glory of the Father and all his holy angels with him. This is the constant teaching of the word of God, and the constant hope of the Church, that Christ will appear. A thousand questions at once suggest themselves: How will Christ appear? When will Christ appear? Where will Christ appear? and so on. What God answers we may enquire, but some of our questions are mere impertinence. How will Christ appear? I believe Christ will appear in person. Whenever I think of the second coming, I never can tolerate the idea of a spiritual coming. That always seems to me to be the most transparent folly that can possibly be put together, because Christ cannot come spiritually, he always is here: ‘Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.’ Christ’s spiritual coming never can be that which is spoken of in Scripture, as the day of our release. I sometimes say to brethren, “Do you think if Christ were to come spiritually now, we should observe the ordinances better?” “Yes, certainly.” “Do you think, for instance, the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper would be better attended to?” “Yes, no doubt it would.” Yes, but then this proves that this is not the coming, which the Bible speaks of, because it is expressly said of the Lord’s Supper, that we are to do it in remembrance of him, till he come. A spiritual coming would make us do it more zealously; there must

be another form of coming which would justify our giving up the supper altogether, and that must be of a personal character, for then, and then only, might the Supper properly cease. We shall not need to have a supper to remind us of the person, when the person himself shall be present in our midst reigning and triumphant in his Church. We believe in a personal reign and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But how will he come? He will doubtless come with great splendor; the angels of God shall be his attendants. We gather from Scripture, that he will come to reign in the midst of his people, that the house of Israel will acknowledge him as King, yea, that all nations shall bow down before him, and kings shall pay him homage. None shall be able to stand against him. "Those that pierced him shall wail because of him." He will come to discern between the righteous and the wicked, to separate the goats from the sheep. He will come graciously to adjudge his people their reward according to their works. He will give to those who have been faithful over a few things to be rulers over many things; and those who have been faithful over many things shall be rulers over many cities. He will come to discern between the works of his people; such as are only wood, hay, and stubble, will be consumed; such as are gold and silver, and precious stones, will stand the fire. He will come to condemn the wicked to eternal punishment, and to take his people up to their everlasting mansions in the skies. We look for such a coming, and without entering into minute details, drawing charts, and painting pictures, we are content to believe that he is coming in his glory, to show himself to be what he ever was — King of kings, and Lord of lords, God over all, blessed for ever; to be adored and worshipped, and no more to be despised and rejected of men. When will he come? That is a question which unbelief asks with a start. Faith replies, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons, of that day and of that hour knoweth no man." Some simpleton says, "But we may know the week, month, or year." Do not trifle with God's Word and make a fool of yourself, because you must know that the expression means that you do not know anything about the time at all, and never will know. Christ will come in a time when we look not for him, just perhaps when the world and the Church are most asleep, when the wise and the foolish virgins have alike fallen into a deep slumber; when the stewards shall begin to beat their fellow-servants, and to drink, and to be drunken; at midnight, or perhaps not till cock-crowing, he will come like a thief, and the house shall be suddenly broken up; but come he will, and that is enough for you and for me to know; and when he cometh

we shall appear, for as he shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory.

**IV.** The fourth thought is, THAT WHEN CHRIST SHALL APPEAR, WE ALSO SHALL APPEAR.

Do you ever feel like those lions in the Zoological Gardens, restlessly walking up and down before the bars of their cage, and seeming to feel that they were never meant to be confined within those narrow limits?

Sometimes they are for thrusting their heads through the bars, and then for dashing back and tearing the back of their dungeon, or for rending up the pavement beneath them, as if they yearned for liberty. Do you ever feel like that? Does your soul ever want to get free from her cage? Here is an iron bar of sin, of doubt, and there is another iron bar of mistrust and infirmity.

Oh! if you could tear them away, could get rid of them all, you would do something for Christ — you would be like Christ. Oh! if you could but by some means or other burst the bands of this captivity! but you cannot, and therefore you feel uneasy. You may have seen an eagle with a chain upon its foot, standing on a rock — poor unhappy thing! it flaps its wings — looks up to the sun — wants to fly right straight ahead at it and stare the sun out of countenance — looks to the blue sky, and seems as if it could sniff the blue beyond the dusky clouds, and wants to be away; and so it tries its wings and dreams of mounting — but that chain, that cruel chain, remorselessly holds it down. Has not it, often been so with you? You feel, “I am not meant to be what I am, I am sure I am not; I have a something in me which is adapted for something better and higher, and I want to mount and soar, but that chain — that dragging chain of the body of sin and death will keep me down.” Now it is to such as you that this text comes, and says to you, “Yes, your present state is not your soul’s true condition, you have a hidden life in you; that life of yours pants to get out of the bonds and fetters which control it, and it shall be delivered soon, for Christ is coming, and when Christ, shall appear you shall appear, — the same appearance that belongs to him belongs to you. He shall come, and then your day of true happiness, and joy, and peace, and everything that you are panting for, and longing for, shall certainly come too.” I wonder whether the little oak inside the acorn — for there is a whole oak there, and there are all the roots, and all the boughs, and everything inside that acorn — I wonder whether that little oak inside the acorn ever has any premonition of the summer weather that will float over it a hundred years hence, and of the mists that will hang in autumn on its sere leaves, and of the hundreds of

acorns which itself will cast, every autumn, upon the earth, when it shall become in the forest a great tree. You and I are like that acorn; inside of each of us are the germs of great things. There is the tree that we are to be,—I mean there is the spiritual thing we are to be, both in body and soul even now within us, and sometimes here below, in happy moments, we get some inklings of what we are to be; and then how we want to burst the shell, to get out of the acorn and to be the oak! Ay, but stop. Christ has not come, Christian, and you cannot get out of that till the time shall come for Jesus to appear, and then shall you appear with him in glory. You will very soon perceive in your rain-water, certain ugly little things which swim and twist about in it, always trying if they can to reach the surface and breathe through one end of their bodies. What makes these little things so lively, those innumerable little things like very small tadpoles, why are they so lively? Possibly they have an idea of what they are going to be. The day will come when all of a sudden there will come out of the case of the creature that you have had swimming about in your water, a long-legged thing with two bright gauze-like wings, which will mount into the air, and on a summer's evening will dance in the sunlight. It is nothing more nor less than a gnat; you have swimming there a gnat in one of its earliest stages. You are just like that; you are an undeveloped being; you have not your wings yet, and yet sometimes in your activity for Christ, when the strong desires for something better are upon you, you leap in foretaste of the bliss to come. I do not know what I am to be, but I feel that there is a heart within me too big for these ribs to hold, I have an immortal spark which cannot have been intended to burn on this poor earth, and then to go out; it must have been meant to burn on heaven's altar. Wait a bit, and when Christ comes you will know what you are. We are in the chrysalis state now, and those who are the liveliest worms among us grow more and more uneasy in that chrysalis state. Some are so frozen up in it that they forget the hereafter, and appear content to remain a chrysalis for ever. But others of us feel we would sooner not be than be what we now are for ever, we feel as if we must burst our bonds, and when that time of bursting shall come, when the chrysalis shall get its painted wings and mount to the land of flowers, then shall we be satisfied. The text tells us — “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear” — when he comes out in all his glory—we also shall appear with him in glory.” If you would like these gracious promises drawn out into detail with regard to the body, you may listen to just such words as these. “It is sown a soulish body, it is raised a Spiritual body. The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from

heaven. As is the earthy such are they also that are earthy; as is the heavenly such are they also that are heavenly." Whatever Christ's body is in heaven, our body is to be like it; whatever its glory and strength and power, our vile body is to be fashioned like unto his glorious body. As for our soul, whatever of absolute perfection — whatever of immortal joy Christ possesses we are to possess that; and as for honor, — whatever of esteem and love Christ may have from intelligent beings, we are to share in the same; and as for position before God — whatever Christ has — we are to stand where he stands. Are his enemies put to confusion? So are ours. Do all worlds discern his glory? they shall discern ours too. Is all dishonor wiped away from him? so shall it be from us. Do they forget for ever the shame and spitting, the cross and the nails? so shall they in our case. Is it for ever "Gory! and honor! and power! and dominion! and bliss without end?" so shall it be in our case. Let us comfort one another therefore, with these words, and look up out of our wormwood, and our chrysalis state, to that happier and better day when we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

All this has nothing to do with a great, many of you. You will die but you will never rise like Christ. You will die, and you will die; — why did I say "and you will die?" Why because you will have to feel the second death, and that second death, mark you, is as much more tremendous than the first as the trumpet of the angel is more terrible than the voice of the preacher can be this morning. Oh I would that Christ were your life, but you are dead, and God will say of you one of these days as Abraham said of Sarah, "Bury the dead out of my sight," and you must be put out of his sight as an obnoxious putrid thing. Oh that he would quicken you this day! "There is life," says the hymn, "in a look at the crucified One." God help you to exercise one look at that Christ of whom I spoke, and then you shall join with the rest of his people in saying, "Christ is our life."

May God bless these feeble words of mine, and own them because of their weakness, the more to illustrate his own grace and power, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

# THE GREAT PHYSICIAN AND HIS PATIENTS.

NO. 618

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 5TH, 1865,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”-  
Matthew 9:12.*

THIS was Christ's apology for mingling with publicans and sinners when the Pharisees murmured against him. He triumphantly cleared himself by shewing that accordingly to the fitness of things he was perfectly in order. He was acting according to his official character. A physician should be found where there is work for him to do, and that it is where healing is required. There was evidently none among the Pharisees, if their own opinion of themselves were to hold good, for they were perfectly whole. There was much to do, according to their own admission, among the publicans and sinners, for they were sore sick; therefore our Lord was in his place, and fittingly executing his office when he sought out those who needed him.

**I.** We shall have no time for a preface this morning, and therefore let us enter at once into the text by observing that MERCY GRACIOUSLY REGARDS SIN AS A DISEASE.

Sin is more than a disease. If it were only a sickness, men were to be pitied for suffering it; but the element of the perverse will, of voluntary rebellion and designed offense enters into sin, otherwise it were far less truly sin; and this makes it more than a sickness, and worse than a malady. Let us not think that the picture of disease really does set forth all the heinous nature of sin; it is only a generous way in which Mercy chooses to look at it and to deal with it. As Justice views it, all the plague, and venom, and virus,



and contagion in the world would be sweet and harmless, compared with one single evil thought or imagination; but Mercy leniently and graciously chooses, in order that it may have a sort of apology for its operations, under the great plan of salvation, to view sin as a disease. It is justified in such a view, for almost everything that may be said of deadly maladies may be said of sin. Let us come to particulars.

Sin is an hereditary disease: we are born with a tendency towards it, nay we are born in it. The taint is in our blood: the very center of our being feels the infection. Born in sin and shapen in iniquity, in sin did our mothers conceive us, and our offspring in like measure received from us that original sin which is part of our fallen nature. Every man born into the world bears within him the seeds of sin, in the bias and current of his mind, nor is this to be wondered at, for “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” “How can he be clean that is born of a woman?”

Sin, like sickness, is very disabling. A sick man cannot carry burdens, climb mountains, run in service, walk with perseverance, or leap for joy. The occupations and the pleasures of other men are things from which he is shut out. Even so does sin prevent our serving God. We cannot pray to him: we cannot praise him aright. In every duty we are weak, and for every good we are feeble. There is not a single moral power of manhood which sin has not stripped of its strength and glory. If we would run in the way of God’s commands, then sin has lamed us; if we would grasp God’s promises, evil has paralysed us; if we would see into the mysteries of grace, guilt has blinded us; if we would hear the voice of God, transgression has smitten us with deafness; and if our voices would swell the song of cherubim and seraphim, alas, the plague of our heart within has made us dumb. Of all or us in our measure it may be said through sin, “unstable as water, then shalt not excel.” Sin weakens man’s nature for all good.

Sin also, like certain diseases, is a very loathsome thing. Some diseases are so extremely disgusting that scarcely can their names be mentioned; but, oh, they are sweetness itself when compared with sin. The most putrid poisonous air that ever blew from a fever hospital, never had such foulness in it as dwells in sin. Pest-houses, and lazaretto-houses are clean and safe compared with the haunts of vice. In God’s esteem, and in the esteem of all holy minds, the most detestable, obnoxious, dreadful thing in the whole world is moral evil. If that could be got rid of, all other evil would cease to be. This is the mother and nurse of all evil, the egg of all mischief, the

fountain of bitterness, the root of misery. Here you have the distilled essence of hell; the “quintessence,” as the old divines would say of everything that is unlovely, disreputable, dishonest, impure, abominable — in a word — damnable.

Like some diseases, sin is fearfully polluting. As the leper cannot be tolerated abroad; as the plague-stricken are separated from their fellows, even so sin separates us from communion with God and holy beings. It is not alone their unwillingness to associate with us, as our horrible unfitness to have fellowship with them. It is dreadful to hear about with us a cancer, which has reached the stage of sickening rottenness; and yet this is not half so terribly disgusting as sin is to the heart of God. God is very gracious, but he cannot endure sin in his presence, and hence to set forth his hatred of it in type and figure he forbade diseased persons to enter his courts, or even to mingle with the camp of his people. For the unclean there was a plain and clear separation until he had been purified. Sin necessarily shuts us out from God’s presence. Into his holy fellowship we must not come, we dare not attempt to come; the fire of his anger would consume us, as it did Nadab and Abihu, if we as sinners should venture near him apart from Christ Jesus. We cannot stand at the altar to officiate as priests before God, though this was the proper lot of manhood, by reason of the leprosy that is on our brow. Our praising God, simple as that might seem, cannot be acceptable in his sight, because of the defilement of our uncircumcised lips. Almighty grace must take away our uncleanness or we cannot worship. Iniquity is a polluting thing. Everything we do and everything we think of grows polluted through our corruption. The unclean person could not touch a vessel, sit on a bed, or come near a garment without defiling it; and our sin has much the same effect. Our prayers have stains in them, our faith is mixed with unbelief, our repentance is not so tender as it should be, our communion is distant and interrupted. We cannot pray without sinning, and there is filth even in our tears. Well was it for Israel that there was an Aaron to bear the sins of their holy things, and blessed is it for us that Jesus takes the sins even of our best works, and casts them into the depths of the sea.

Sin too may be likened to many sicknesses from its being contagious. A man cannot be a sinner alone. “One sinner destroyeth much good.” The seeds of sin are winged like thistle-down. You may shut up the leper in a lazarus-house, but there is no such way of shutting up sin, it will get out and spread itself. A man, if he be evil, will make others evil. His children will

imitate him; his dependants, feeling his influence, will walk in his footsteps. Even his neighbors cannot look upon his sin without being in some measure infected by it, for “the thought of evil is sin.” There is a fierce contiguousness in every form of moral evil; like fire among stubble it spreads most rapidly.

Sin moreover, like many diseases, is very painful; and yet, on the other hand, at certain stages it brings on a deadness, a numbness of soul preventing pain. The most of men are unconscious of the misery of the fall. They think themselves rich and increased in goods, having need of nothing, when they are naked, and poor and miserable. Sin causes a madness which makes sick souls dream that they are in sound health. They talk as though heaven were their heritage, when they are sitting on the brink of hell. But when sin is really discerned, then it becomes painful. I would sooner suffer — I know not what may be the pangs of some disease, but I feel sure I may say this — I would sooner suffer a complication of all the ills that flesh is heir to, than suffer the plague of a guilty, awakened, enlightened, quickened conscience; for when conscience accuseth a man there is no rest for him either day or night; its little finger is heavier than the loins of all other griefs. When sin becomes exceeding sinful before the eye, then there is a gloom and a heaviness of spirit which crushes the soul into despair, making life bitter, as Pharaoh did the lives of the children of Israel. Speak of Egyptian darkness, it was bright as noon-day compared with the darkness of a mind borne down with its own guilt. Oh what wretchedness was mine before I laid hold on Christ. There are some who feel not so acutely the agony of conflict with sin, but it was my lot to feel a horror of great darkness, verging upon despair, so that had I not soon found a Savior, my soul had chosen strangling rather than life. Believe me, there is no pain so bitter as the pain of sin, and no curse so heavy as the curse which comes from the black lips of our civil iniquities; and yet I would to God that some of you felt it now that ye might not feel it hereafter. I would that this whip would fall upon your backs, that you might be flogged out of your self-righteousness, and made to fly to Jesus Christ and find a shelter there.

The disease of sin is deep-seated, and has its throne in the heart. It does not lie in the hand or foot, it is not to be removed by amputation, much less by outward applications; no lancet can reach it, it is impossible to cauterize it. The skill of physician can often extract the roots of disease, but no skill

can ever reach this. It has entered the marrow, the very core and center of our being, and only the Divine one is able to purge us from it.

*“No outward forms can make me clean  
The leprosy lies deep within.”*

It is in its own nature wholly incurable. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” If so, then can he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well. Can a brine fountain send forth sweet waters? Shall the thorn suddenly yield olives? Can the cataract which has been for ever dashing down the steep, reverse its course and return towards the river-head? Shall fire suddenly become gentle and lose its consuming power while the fuel is round about it? Shall the lion of himself eat straw like the ox? Shall the leopard bleat like a lamb? Such changes, being changes or nature, are only to be wrought by divine strength; and so it is not possible for the disease of sin ever to be cured by any human remedies. Man cannot cure himself. He may reform, He may drive the disease inward, and prevent its coming out upon the skin; He may so model, and guide, and restrain himself, that the coarser forms of sin which are condemned among men may not appear in him; but the virus, the essential poison of sin, no man can ever extract from his own heart, nor can another man do it for him. Jehovah Rophi, the healing Lord, must manifest his omnipotent power. The utmost religiousness, the most devout prayers, the greatest possible circumspection, will not avail to remove the taint of sin, if they spring from an unrenewed heart. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can it be.

And so, let us close the story of this sickness of sin, by observing that it is a mortal disease. It kills not just now, but it will kill ere long. Not merely shall the body die as the result of sin, but the soul must be killed for ever with eternal wrath. O sinner, thou little knowest what thy sin will bring thee to; but if thou wilt read in God’s Word, thou shalt discover that it will bring thee to the worm that never dies, and to the fire that never can be quenched. Perhaps to-morrow thou mayest know what a full-blown sin is; perhaps to-morrow, I said — that word may be prophetic to some of you — but if not to-morrow, it is but a matter of time, a few months, more or less, and you will be in torment. Sin, when it is ripened, bringeth forth death and damnation. Oh! thou dost not know what that word “to be damned” means! Thou canst play with it sometimes, and lightly hurl it at thy fellow creatures; but couldst thou only once hear the shriek of a

damned soul, couldst thou only once see a spirit cast out from the presence of God into eternal misery, surely it would compel thee to cry, "What must I do to be saved."

Enough of this: it is clear that there is a very excellent parallel to be drawn between sin and disease. Humbling as it is, yet the fact is nevertheless most certain, that we are all suffering under the disease of sin.

## **II. But now, secondly, IT PLEASES DIVINE MERCY TO GIVE TO CHRIST THE CHARACTER OF A PHYSICIAN.**

Having deigned to consider sin as a disease, which is a great proof of mercy, it now graciously confers upon Christ the character of a physician. Be it for ever understood that Jesus Christ never came into the world merely to explain what sin is. Moses had for his mission the exposition of sin, Christ has for his mission the eradication of it. We know what sin is through the law: that is as much as the law can do for us. Christ comes, not merely to tell us what it is, but to inform us how it can be removed. Jesus did not come to apologize for sin; Christ never died in order that sin might appear less sinful, that God might be less severe towards sin, or hate it less. God forbid! We never see sin to be so black as when we view its evil as revealed in the sufferings of Jesus, nor is God's wrath ever more intolerable than when we behold it consuming his only-begotten Son.

"Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Christ did not come to lay a flattering unction to men's souls, to prevent distress of conscience, to say to them "Peace, Peace!" where there is no peace; no, he came to cure sin, not to film it over; not to make men forget the disease by drugging them with presumptuous draughts of consolation, but by absolutely removing that which is the cause of their dread and of their fear to make them whole. Christ Jesus did not come in order that you might continue in sin and escape the penalty of it; he did not come to prevent the disease being mortal, but to take the disease itself away. Many people think that, when we preach salvation, we mean salvation from going to hell. We do not mean that, but we mean a great deal more; we preach salvation from sin; we say that Christ is able to save a man; and we mean by that that he is able to save him from sin and to make him holy; to make him a new man. No person has any right to say, "I am saved," while he continues in sin as he did before. How can you be saved from sin while you are living in it? A man that is drowning cannot

say he is saved from the water while he is sinking in it; a man that is frost-bitten cannot say, with any truth, that he is saved from the cold while he is stiffened in the wintry blast. No, man, Christ did not come to save thee in thy sins, but to save thee from thy sins; not to make the disease so that it should not kill thee, but to let it remain in itself mortal, and, nevertheless, to remove it from thee, and thee from it. Christ Jesus came then to heal us from the plague of sin, to touch us with his hand and say, "I will, be thou clean."

When a physician presents himself, one of the first enquiries is, "Is, he a regular practitioner? Has he a right to practice? Has he a diploma?" Very properly, the law requires that a man shall not be allowed to hack our bodies and poison us with drugs at his own pleasure without having at least a show of knowing what he is at. It has been tartly said that "a doctor is a man who pours drugs, of which he knows little, into a body of which he knows still less." I fear that is often the case. Still a diploma is the best safeguard mortals have devised. Christ has the best authority for practising as a Physician. He has a divine diploma. Would you like to see his diploma? I will read you a few words of it: it comes from the highest authority, not from the College of Physicians, but from the God of Physicians. Here are the words of it in the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted." He has a diploma for binding up broken hearts. I should not like to trust myself to a physician who was a mere self-dubbed doctor who could not show any authorization; I must have him know as much as a man can know, little as I believe that will probably be. He must have a diploma; it must be signed and sealed too, and be in a regular manner, for few sensible men will risk their lives with ignorant quacks. Now Jesus Christ has his diploma and there it is — God hath sent him to bind up the brokenhearted. The next thing you want in a physician is education; you want to know that he is thoroughly qualified; he must have walked the hospitals. And certainly our Lord Jesus Christ has done so. What form of disease did he not meet with? When he was here among men it pleased God to let the devil loose, in order that there might be more than usual venom in the veins of poor diseased manhood; and Christ met the devil at his darkest hour and fought with the great enemy when he had full liberty to do his worst with him. Jesus did indeed enter into the woes of men.

Walked the hospital! Why the whole world was an infirmary, and Christ the one only physician, going from couch to couch, healing the sons of men.

Something more be it observed, may be said of him, he is experimentally as well as by education qualified in the healing art. I have heard of a celebrated physician that he was wont to try the effect of his medicines upon himself. This has been done in our Masters case. There is not a single disease which he does not know experimentally, for he himself took our sicknesses and infirmities. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He knows his patient's case by having passed through the case himself. There is no brokenness of heart, there is no grief of soul which Jesus Christ has not himself participated in; and though you may say he knows not sin in its infection, yet he knows sin in its imputation, and is, by having suffered all its penalties, perfectly well acquainted with it.

One likes a physician, too, who has a wide practice. One does not care for a man's merely understanding his tools; we like to know whether he has used them, and whether he has been successful in his art. Blessed be the name of the beloved Physician! he has the widest imaginable practice. These eighteen hundred years he has been healing sin-sick souls — what am I saying? — these six thousand years he has been “mighty to save;” for before he bodily gave himself to the cross, the virtue of the medicine of his own blood had begun to operate upon the sons of men. O souls, ye may see in heaven the multitudes whom he has healed. There, before the eternal throne, you may view the myriads who have been delivered from all sorts of diseases through the power and virtue of his touch. You need not fear to trust yourselves in his hands, for even the hem of his garment healeth our diseases.

To sum up the virtues of this Physician in a very few words: His cures are very speedy — there is life in a look at him; his cures are radical — he strikes at the very center of the disease, and hence his cures are very sure and certain. He never fails, and the disease never returns. There is no relapse where Christ heals; no fear that one of his patients should be but patched up for a season, he makes a new man of him: a new heart also does he give him, and a right spirit does he put within him. He is a physician, one of a thousand, because he is well-skilled in all diseases. Physicians generally have some specialite. They may know a little about almost all our pains and ills, but there is usually one disease which they have studied the most carefully, one part of the human frame whose

anatomy is as well-known to them as the rooms and cupboards of their own house. Jesus Christ has made the whole of human nature his specialite. He is as much at home with one sinner as with another sinner, and never yet did he meet with an out-of-the-way case that was out of the way to him. He has had extraordinary complications of strange diseases to deal with, but he has known exactly in one moment, with one glance of his eye, how to treat the patient. He is the only universal doctor I 'at home' in every case; the medicine he gives is a catholicon; it heals in every instance, never failing. His medicine is himself! If there be a smart caused by it, it is borne upon his own back. "By his stripes we are healed." "His flesh is meat indeed; his blood is drink indeed:" he himself casts out the disease from poor dying men. We do but trust him, and sin dies: we love him, and grace lives; we wait for him, and grace is strengthened; we see him, as we soon shall, and grace is perfected for ever. O blessed physician for this desperate disease!

**III.** I cannot, however, tarry longer on that point, but come to the third, which is the main one that I am driving at; namely, THAT NEED IS THAT ALONE WHICH MOVES OUR GRACIOUS PHYSICIAN TO COME TO OUR AID.

He says, "They that are whole need not a physician," and you will see the natural conclusion from his line of reasoning is, "I do not go to the whole, because they do not need me; I go to the sick because they do need me; the reason why I go anywhere is because I am needed." I believe, dear friends, though doubtless there are some exceptions, that if you were to take the medical profession through, you would perceive larger-heartedness, and more humanity there than almost anywhere; and you would find that there is scarcely a physician, certainly none known to me, who would, if he had two urgent cases to consider, make any distinction between the two, except that he would give his first attention to the sufferer who needed him most. Of course if the matters are both trivial, common sense allows a man to select that which will best remunerate him for his skill, but in imminently dangerous cases, necessity decides. The true physician is born with a physician's heart, and feels for the woes of his fellow men; and, though a man has obtained a diploma, he is no physician, and ought not to practice if his soul is not in his work, and his heart full of benevolence to the afflicted.

The true physician having a sympathy and an intense desire to be of service, if there be two persons requiring him, would say, "This is in the more imminent danger, I shall go there first." Now what is most certainly



only fair to acknowledge concerning human physicians, we must admit with a far greater cogency concerning the great physician of souls. If there were two sinners both perishing, and Christ were not able to save at the same moment more than one, he would go to that one first which needed him most. This is his rule. He acts according to sovereignty, but that sovereignty is under the control of his own infinite, mercy, and if he hears a cry from two hearts to-day, if he should give any preference, the preference would be given to that which was the cry of the most lost, the most abject, the most needy sinner. Now think this over and you will see that it is true, and most consolatory. What was it made Christ a physician at all? Was it not because men were sick with sin? Suppose they had been perfect, would Christ have ever been a Savior if men had not been lost? Brethren, it would have been a work of supererogation; it would have been a folly, a monstrous folly, on his part, to undertake an office which was not required of him. It is sin which makes room for his work as a Savior. I say it — you will understand me — he is only a Savior because there are sinners, and his Saviorship is based upon our sinnership. He takes that position because he is wanted. Again, what was the main thought which was upon him when he was compounding his great medicine? What was it made him shed great drops of blood? Was it human guilt, or human merit, think you? Why guilt, and guilt alone. What made him give his back to the scourgers, and his cheeks, to the smiters? What made him stretch his arms to the cross and give his feet to the nails? What made him bear the unsufferable wrath of Almighty God? Was it man's goodness? Why you cannot think of such a thing; it was human vileness, villany, degradation, iniquity, which made such sufferings as these all needful. As I see then Christ in his great surgery, compounding the Almighty medicine which is to expel the disease from the veins of humanity, I see him every moment thinking of sin! sin! sin! Man's sin makes him die.

And now that he is in heaven, beloved, what is it that Christ is thinking of there? "He maketh intercession" — what, for? For the righteous? If they were self-righteous, perfectly righteous, they would not need intercession from him. "He maketh intercession for the transgressors." He is exalted on high — what for? To reward the good? Nay, verily, but to give repentance and remission of sins — evidently to those who have no repentance and whose sins have need to be forgiven. Up in heaven, Christ still has his eye upon sinners — sinners are the jewels whom he seeks. Where, again, was Jesus Christ when he was on earth? Did he not spend the most of his time

among sinners? Was he not always dealing out healing to the sick, life to the dead, and so on? You might ask again, on the other hand, to whom is the gospel sent? What is it? "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." That is the gospel — "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned;" so that those who are hidden to believe are evidently those who deserve to be damned. Need, need, need alone quickens the physician's footsteps, bringing Jesus from the throne of glory to the cross, and in his spiritual power, bringing him every day from the throne of his Father down to broken-hearted heavy-laden souls.

Now, this is very plain talking, and you all receive it, but still the most of people do not understand it. A minister, when he had done preaching in a country village, said to a farm-laborer who had been listening to him, "Do you think Jesus Christ died to save good people, or bad people?" "Well, sir," said the man, "I should say he died to save good people." "But did he die to save bad people?" "No, sir; no, certainly not, sir." "Well, then, what will become of you and me?" "Well, sir, I do not know. I dare say you be pretty good, sir; and I try to be as good as I can." That is just the common doctrine; and after all, though we think it has died out among us, that is the religion of ninety-nine English people out of every hundred who know nothing of divine grace: we are to be as good as we can; we are to go to church or to chapel, and do all that we can, and then Jesus Christ died for us, and we shall be saved. Whereas the gospel is that he did not do anything at all for people who can rely on themselves, but gave himself for lost and ruined ones. He did not come into the world to save self-righteous people; on their own showing, they do not want to be saved. He comes because we need him, and therefore he comes only to those who need him; and if we do not need him, and are such good respectable people, we must find our own way to heaven. Need, need alone, is that which quickens the physician's footsteps.

**IV.** We therefore come to another point, upon which we shall not stay many minutes. It follows, therefore, and the text positively asserts it, that **THE WHOLE — THAT THOSE WHO HAVE NO GREAT NEED — NO NEED AT ALL, WILL BE UNAIDED BY CHRIST.**

OF course they ought to be left alone. No physician in his senses thinks of sending a prescription, no surgeon thinks of sending his bottles and his boxes of pills to people who profess to be perfectly well. The prescription

would be put into the fire and the physic thrown in the streets — the man himself would reckon it to be a gross insult. Christ did not come into the world merely to insult humanity. If humanity be the fine thing it thinks it is, then let it exalt itself as it may, and let it go on with the health it thinks it possesses; let it work out its own salvation if it will allow that even this is required. To send a physician to those who are whole is an insult to the physician too. He knocks at the door, “Who is ill here?” is the first question. “Nobody, we are all well, thank you, sir: we are all well, we thank God: we are not as other men are down the street there, we have no fever, the small-pox never comes here, we never catch the scarlatina, we have nothing of the kind, sir; we are glad to see you — glad to see you, but — we have nothing the matter with us.” The physician would find at once that he had been hoaxed in being asked there. And that truly is the treatment Jesus Christ gets from a great many people. You hear them say, “Lord have mercy upon us, miserable sinners” — dressed in satin and all sorts of furbelows, and as good people as you would find in all the parish; and if you come to question them, they are not “miserable sinners” at all. I would like to chalk “miserable sinners” on their backs, and see whether they could bear it. It is the same with you — you come here, and if I pray about sinners, there are some of you who say, “Yes, yes, we are sinners;” and yet if I came round and said, “Now let us take the ten commandments — have you broken them?” I daresay there are some here who would say, Really I do not know that I have in particular done anything wrong I do not feel that I have erred very remarkably.” No, the fact is you insult Christ by sending to him when you are not ill, and it is nothing better than impertinence, though you think it to be a compliment. The whole have no need of a physician: there is no need for a physician’s skill. “Why,” saith the doctor, as he looks round upon all his store of knowledge, what is the good of this? — a fool is as good as I am to a man who is not ill. If you were sick, I would try to do my best, but as there is nothing the matter with you, there is no room for me.” You may fetch any crossing-sweeper, and he will be of as much use to you as the best physician, when you are not ill. So if you do not confess yourselves really to be sinners, Jesus will have no preciousness in your eyes, he will be but an ordinary person. If you are not sick, there is no likelihood of gratitude. Men will not thank a physician for doing nothing. You will never be thankful to Christ for saving you, if you do not feel that you want saving. Then again, there will be no honor to him. Suppose you went to heaven, and entered there in the same self-righteous frame of mind as you are in now, what would you say?

“Well done!” There would be no honor to Christ, no glory to Jesus. A man must have a deep and conscious need of Christ, or else he cannot illuminate the throne of Christ with glory by his praise, when he shall enter heaven.

Now methinks there is some sweet music in what I have been saying to those of you who do need, though it must sound like a mockery to those of you who think you do not need it.

**V.** To conclude, it follows then, that **THOSE WHO ARE SICK SHALL BE HELPED BY JESUS.** Let the question go round these galleries and this area this morning, “Am I sick? Am I sinful? Then I have a need of Jesus, and need is the only thing that will bring Jesus to me? Oh says one, “but I am so very sinful.” Then you have a very great need, and there is room for very great power on the Savior’s part, and that display of grace shall give him very great glory. Sinner, believe on him, that he can save thee; trust him to save thee and let not thy great sin keep thee back. “Oh but I have so many sins!” Then again thou hast the greater need, and as it is need that brings the doctor, so thy many needs will be so many knocks at his door, so many rings at his bell; he will come the faster only plead earnestly every one of these thy sins, and ask him to have pity upon thee. “Yes,” say you “but I have been so long sick.” Then your case is a very bad one, and there is the more need of his care. He healed the woman that had been thirty-six years disabled, and if you have been thirty-six years-ay, if it be eighty years, he is still able to heal, and your need — let us keep to that — your need is your only plea. You have evidently a very strong plea, for you have a very great need. “Ah,” says another, “but I have relapsed since I thought I was healed — I have backslidden.” Now there is a special promise given to that form or sickness, “I will heal their backsliding.” He does not specially say “I will heal their drunkenness and so on,” but here is a special promise for a special case. Now you want him. This is a great sin, this backsliding. Go to him — ask him the rather to come to you. “Yes,” says another, “but I cannot feel my sin as I would.” This only proves how much you need the Lord Jesus, since you have not even that form of fitness which lies in a deep sense of need; you cannot even feel, for you have the stone in the heart. Oh make this a plea with him. Say “Jesus I want thee more than anybody else, for there are some who have a little health; they can feel they are diseased, but I have not even that. I want thee, oh I want thee more than any.” Perhaps you will say “But I cannot believe on him as I would.” Then add that also to your other sins, confess your unbelief, tell him you have great need of him to give you faith; and go to him, and oh may he

help you to believe that he is able to forgive this sin also. "Well," says one, "but I grow worse the more I think about these things." I am glad of it, dear friend, this growing worse is a part of the cure. Suppose you should keep on growing worse, if you should get to feel yourself as black as the devil and as damned as a lost soul, yet still while you are in this world the great physician can heal you, and you have still this great plea, that, you want him, you want him. "Oh," says one, "I cannot see how I can plead my need as the only thing." My dear friend, what would you plead, suppose you were publicly begging. If I had to turn to the trade of a beggar, believe me, I would not wear this black coat, or, if I did, I would take care to have it pretty well riddled with holes; because the great thing you have to do when you plead in the street, is to convince the passers-by that you are in need. Some lean wretched-looking fellows have faces which are worth a fortune to them — their cheeks white with consumption — their bodies thin and lean as with starvation — with scarce a handful of rags on them, they squat down in some corner and write on a paper "I am starving," and as you pass them you cannot help it, your hand goes into your pocket — "Here is a case of destitution," you say-and you give them relief. Imitate these vagabonds in all but their deception. Use their logic, the rational argument, that need is a beggar's best plea. You are destitute, you are starving; spread your case before God. The best case you can make out in order to prevail with God, is a bad one. Let it be as bad as it can be and I venture to say the worst is the best. Do not be apologising, attempting to make your sins less than they are; tell him you are a wretch undone without his sovereign grace, and there guilty and vile, and self-aborred, fall flat before him, say, "Lord Jesus, if thou wantest some one to heal; I am just the man. If thou wantest a case that can be blazoned abroad and that will make the public ears ring and ring again with the praise of thy all-healing medicine, I am thy man, Lord. If thou wantest one full of sores and wounds and putrefying disease like Job upon a dunghill; if thou wantest one that is very far gone, that is rotten through and through, Lord, I am thy man." O think you, sinner, he is just your Savior, for while he loves to meet with such cases as yours, you should rejoice to meet with such a Savior as he is; and all you are asked to do is to believe that he can save you and to trust him to do it. If you knew him you would believe him. He loves to save. He can save the vilest. Trust him then, and may the Spirit of God so lead you to understand him, that you can rely upon him, and, if you do, he will say, "Sinner, thy sins be forgiven thee, be of good cheer, go on thy way rejoicing."

May God bless these words, for Christ's sake. Amen.

# THE GOLDEN KEY OF PRAYER.

NO. 619

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 12TH, 1865,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” — Jeremiah 33:3.*

SOME of the most learned works in the world smell of the midnight oil; but the most spiritual, and most comforting books and sayings of men usually have a savor about them of prison-damp. I might quote many instances: John Bunyan's Pilgrim may suffice instead of a hundred others; and this good text of ours, all mouldy and chill with the prison in which Jeremiah lay, hath nevertheless a brightness and a beauty about it, which it might never have had if it had not come as a cheering word to the prisoner of the Lord, shut up in the court of the prison-house. God's people have always in their worst condition found out the best of their God. He is good at all times; but he seemeth to be at his best when they are at their worst. “How could you bear your long imprisonment so well?” said one to the Landgrave of Hesse, who had been shut up for his attachment to the principles of the Reformation. He replied “The divine consolations of martyrs were with me.” Doubtless there is a consolation more deep, more strong than any other, which God keeps for those who, being his faithful witnesses, have to endure exceeding great tribulation from the enmity of man. There is a glorious aurora for the frigid zone; and stars glisten in northern skies with unusual splendor. Rutherford had a quaint saying, that when he was cast into the cellars of affliction, he remembered that the great King always kept his wine there, and he began to seek at once for the wine-bottles, and to drink of the “wines on the lees well refined.” They who dive in the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls. You know, my companions in affliction, that it is so. You whose bones have been ready to come through the skin through long lying upon the weary couch; you who

have seen your earthly goods carried away from you, and have been reduced well nigh to penury; you who have gone to the grave yet seven times, till you have feared that your last earthly friend would be borne away by unpitying Death; you have proved that he is a faithful God, and that as your tribulations abound, so your consolations also abound by Christ Jesus. My prayer is, in taking this text this morning, that some other prisoners of the Lord may have its joyous promise spoken home to them; that you who are straitly shut up and cannot come forth by reason of present heaviness of spirit, may hear him say, as with a soft whisper in your ears, and in your hearts, “Call upon me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.”

The text naturally splits itself up into three distinct particles of truth. Upon these let us speak as we are enabled by God the Holy Spirit. First, prayer commanded — “Call unto me;” secondly, an answer promised — “And I will answer thee;” thirdly, faith encouraged — “And shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.”

## **I.** The first head is PRAYER COMMANDED.

We are not merely counselled and recommended to pray, but bidden to pray. This is great condescension. An hospital is built: it is considered sufficient that free admission shall be given to the sick when they seek it; but no order in council is made that a man must enter its gates. A soup kitchen is well provided for in the depth of winter. Notice is promulgated that those who are poor may receive food on application; but no one thinks of passing an Act of Parliament, compelling the poor to come and wait at the door to take the charity. It is thought to be enough to proffer it without issuing any sort of mandate that men shall accept it. Yet so strange is the infatuation of man on the one hand, which makes him need a command to be merciful to his own soul, and so marvellous is the condescension of our gracious God on the other, that he issues a command of love without which not a man of Adam born would partake of the gospel feast, but would rather starve than come. In the matter of prayer it is even so. God’s own people need, or else they would not receive it, a command to pray. How is this? Because, dear friends, we are very subject to fits of worldliness, if indeed that be not our usual state. We do not forget to eat: we do not forget to take the shop shutters down: we do not forget to be diligent in business: we do not forget to go to our beds to rest: but we often do forget to wrestle with God in prayer and to spend, as we ought to



spend, long periods in consecrated fellowship with our Father and our God. With too many professors the ledger is so bulky that you cannot move it, and the Bible, representing their devotion, is so small that you might almost put it in your waistcoat pocket. Hours for the world! Moments for Christ! The world has the best, and our closet the parings of our time. We give our strength and freshness to the ways of mammon, and our fatigue and languor to the ways of God. Hence it is that we need to be commanded to attend to that very act which it ought to be our greatest happiness, as it is our highest privilege to perform, viz. to meet with our God. "Call upon me," saith he, for he knows that we are apt to forget to call upon God. "What meanest thou, oh, sleeper? arise and call upon thy God," is an exhortation which is needed by us as well as by Jonah in the storm.

He understands what heavy hearts we have sometimes, when under a sense of sin. Satan says to us, "Why should you pray? How can you I hope to prevail? In vain, thou sayest, I will arise and go to my Father, for thou art not worthy to be one of his hired servants. How canst thou see the king's face after thou hast played the traitor against him? How wilt thou dare to approach unto the altar when thou hast thyself defiled it, and when the sacrifice which thou wouldst bring there is a poor polluted one?" O brethren, it is well for us that we are commanded to pray, or else in times of heaviness we might give it up. If God command me, unfit as I may be, I will creep to the footstool of grace; and since he says, "Pray without ceasing," though my words fail me and my heart itself will wander, yet I will still stammer out the wishes of my hungering soul and say, "O God, at least teach me to pray and help me to prevail with thee." Are we not commanded to pray also because of our frequent unbelief? Unbelief whispers, "What profit is there if thou shouldst seek the Lord upon such-and-such a matter?" This is a case quite out of the list of those things wherein God hath interposed, and, therefore (saith the devil), if you were in any other position you might rest upon the mighty arm of God; but here your prayer will not avail you. Either it is too trivial a matter, or it is too connected with temporals, or else it is a matter in which you have sinned too much, or else it is too high, too hard, too complicated a piece of business, you have no right to take that before God! So suggests the foul fiend of hell. Therefore, there stands written as an every-day precept suitable to every case into which a Christian can be cast, "Call unto me — call unto me." Art thou sick? Wouldst thou be healed? Cry unto me, for I

am a Great Physician. Does providence trouble thee? Art thou fearful that thou shalt not provide things honest in the sight of man? Call unto me! Do thy children vex thee? Dost thou feel that which is sharper than an adder's tooth — a thankless child? Call unto me. Are thy griefs little yet painful, like small points and pricks of thorns? Call unto me! Is thy burden heavy as though it would make thy back break beneath its load? Call unto me! "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." In the valley — on the mountain — on the barren rock — in the briny sea, submerged, anon, beneath the billows, and lifted up by-and-by upon the crest of the waves — in the furnace when the coals are glowing — in the gates of death when the jaws of hell would shut themselves upon thee — cease thou not, for the commandment evermore addresses thee with "Call unto me." Still prayer is mighty and must prevail with God to bring thee thy deliverance. These are some of the reasons why the privilege of supplication is also in Holy Scripture spoken of as a duty: there are many more, but these will suffice this morning.

We must not leave our first part till we have made another remark. We ought to be very glad that God hath given us this command in his word that it may be sure and abiding. You may turn to fifty passages where the same precept is uttered. I do not often read in Scripture, "Thou shalt not kill;" "Thou shalt not covet." Twice the law is given, but I often read gospel precepts, for if the law be given twice, the gospel is given seventy times seven. For every precept which I cannot keep, by reason of my being weak through the flesh, I find a thousand precepts, which it is sweet and pleasant for me to keep, by reason of the power of the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in the children of God; and this command to pray is insisted upon again and again. It may be a seasonable exercise for some of you to find out how often in scripture you are told to pray. You will be surprised to find how many times such words as these are given; "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee" — "Ye people, pour out your heart before him." "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" — "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. Pray without ceasing" — "Come boldly unto the throne of grace," "Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you." "Continue in prayer." I need not multiply where I could not possibly exhaust. I pick two or three out of this great bag of pearls. Come, Christian, you ought never to question whether you have a right to pray: you should never ask, "May I

be permitted to come into his presence?" When you have so many commands, (and God's commands are all promises, and all enablings,) you may come boldly unto the throne of heavenly grace, by the new and living way through the rent veil.

But there are times when God not only commands his people to pray in the Bible, but he also commands them to pray directly by the motions of his Holy Spirit. You who know the inner life comprehend me at once. You feel on a sudden, possibly in the midst of business, the pressing thought that you must retire to pray. It maybe, you do not at first take particular notice of the inclination, but it comes again, and again, and again — "Retire and pray!" I find that in the matter of prayer, I am myself very much like a water-wheel which runs well when there is plenty of water, but which turns with very little force when the brook is growing shallow; or, like the ship which flies over the waves, putting out all her canvas when the wind is favorable, but which has to tack about most laboriously when there is but little of the favoring breeze. Now, it strikes me that whenever our Lord gives you the special inclination to pray, that you should double your diligence. You ought always to pray and not to faint; yet when he gives you the special longing after prayer, and you feel a peculiar aptness and enjoyment in it, you have, over and above the command which is constantly binding, another command which should compel you to cheerful obedience. At such times I think we may stand in the position of David, to whom the Lord said. "When thou hearest a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then shalt thou bestir thyself." That going in the tops of the mulberry trees may have been the footfalls of angels hastening to the help of David, and then David was to smite the Philistines, and when God's mercies are coming, their footfalls are our desires to pray; and our desires to pray should be at once an indication that, the set time to favor Zion is come. Sow plentifully now, for thou canst sow in hope; plough joyously now, for thy harvest is sure. Wrestle now, Jacob, for thou art about to be made a prevailing prince, and thy name shall be called Israel. Now is thy time, spiritual merchantmen; the market is high, trade much; thy profit shall be large. See to it that thou usest right well the golden hour, and reap thy harvest while the sun shines. When we enjoy visitations from on high we should be peculiarly constant in prayer; and if some other duty less pressing should have the go-bye for a season, it will not be amiss and we shalt be no loser; for when God bids us specially pray by the monitions of his spirit, then should we bestir ourselves in prayer.

## II. Let us now take the second head — AN ANSWER PROMISED.

We ought not to tolerate for a minute the ghastly and grievous thought that God will not answer prayer. His nature, as manifested in Christ Jesus, demands it. He has revealed himself in the gospel as a God of love, full of grace and truth; and how can he refuse to help those of his creatures who humbly in his own appointed way seek his face and favor? When the Athenian senate, upon one occasion, found it most convenient to meet together in the open air, as they were sitting in their deliberations, a sparrow, pursued by a hawk, flew in the direction of the senate. Being hard pressed by the bird of prey, it sought shelter in the bosom of one of the senators. He, being a man of rough and vulgar mould, took the bird from his bosom, dashed it on the ground and so killed it. Whereupon the whole senate rose in uproar, and without one single dissenting voice, condemned him to die, as being unworthy of a seat in the senate with them, or to be called an Athenian, if he did not render succor to a creature that confided in him. Can we suppose that the God of heaven, whose nature is love, could tear out of his bosom the poor fluttering dove that flies from the eagle of justice into the bosom of his mercy? Will he give the invitation to us to seek his face, and when we as he knows, with so much trepidation of fear, yet summon courage enough to fly into his bosom, wilt he then be unjust and ungracious enough to forget to hear our cry and to answer us? Let us not think so hardly of the God of heaven. Let us recollect next, his vast character as well as his nature. I mean the character which he has won for himself by his past deeds of grace. Consider, my brethren, that one stupendous display of bounty — if I were to mention a thousand I could not give a better illustration of the character of God than that one deed — “He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all” — and it is not my inference only, but the inspired conclusion of an apostle — “how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” If the Lord did not refuse to listen to my voice when I was a guilty sinner and an enemy, how can he disregard my cry now, that I am justified and saved! How is it that he heard the voice of my misery when my heart knew it not, and would not seek relief, if after all he will not hear me now that I am his child, his friend? The streaming wounds of Jesus are the sure guarantees for answered prayer. George Herbert represents in that quaint poem of his, “The Bag,” the Savior saying

*“If ye have anything to send or write  
(I have no bag, but here is room)  
Unto my Father’s hands and sight,  
(Believe me) it shall safely come.*

*That I shall mind what you impart  
Look, you may put it very near my heart,  
Or if hereafter any of friends  
Will use me in this kind, the door  
Shall still be open; what he sends  
I will present and somewhat more  
Not to his hurt.”*

Surely, George Herbert’s thought was that the atonement was in itself a guarantee that prayer must be heard, that the great gash made near the Savior’s heart, which let the light into the very depths of the heart of Deity, was a proof that he who sits in heaven would hear the cry of his people. You misread Calvary, if you think that prayer is useless. But, beloved, we have the Lord’s own promise for it, and he is a God that cannot lie. “Call upon me in, the day of trouble and I will answer thee.” Has he not said, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believe that ye shall have it and ye shall have it.” We cannot pray, indeed, unless we believe this doctrine; “for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them, that diligently seek him;” and if we have any question at all about whether our prayer will be heard, we are comparable to him that wavereth; “for he who wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed; let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.”

Furthermore, it is not necessary, still it may strengthen the point, if we add that our own experience leads us to believe that God will answer prayer. I must not speak for you; but I may speak for myself. If there be anything I know, anything that I am quite assured of beyond all question, it is that praying breath is never spent in vain. If no other man here can say it, I dare to say it, and I know that I can prove it. My own conversion is the result of prayer, long, affectionate, earnest, importunate. Parents prayed for me; God heard their cries, and here I am to preach the gospel. Since then I have adventured upon some things that were far beyond my capacity as I thought; but I have never failed, because I have cast myself upon the Lord. You know as a church that I have not scrupled to indulge large ideas of what we might do for God; and we have accomplished all that we purposed. I have sought God’s aid, and assistance, and help, in all my

manifold undertakings, and though I cannot tell here the story of my private life in God's work, yet if it were written it would be a standing proof that there is a God that answers prayer. He has heard my prayers, not now and then, nor once nor twice, but so many times, that it has grown into a habit with me to spread my case before God with the absolute certainty that whatsoever I ask of God, he will give to me. It is not now a "Perhaps" or a possibility. I know that my Lord answers me, and I dare not doubt, it were indeed folly if I did. As I am sure that a certain amount of leverage will lift a weight, so I know that a certain amount of prayer will get anything from God. As the rain-cloud brings the shower, so prayer brings the blessing. As spring scatters flowers, so supplication ensures mercies. In all labor there is profit, but most of all in the work of intercession: I am sure of this, for I have reaped it. As I put trust in the queen's money, and have never failed yet to buy what I want when I produce the cash, so put I trust in God's promises, and mean to do so till I find that he shall once tell me that they are base coin, and will not do to trade with in heaven's market. But why should I speak? O brothers and sisters, you all know in your own selves that God hears prayer; if you do not, then where is your Christianity? where is your religion? You will need to learn what are the first elements of the truth; for all saints, young or old, set it down as certain that he doth hear prayer.

Still remember that prayer is always to be offered in submission to God's will; that when we say, God heareth prayer, we do not intend by that, that he always gives us literally what we ask for. We do mean, however, this, that he gives us what is best for us; and that if he does not give us the mercy we ask for in silver, he bestows it upon us in gold. If he doth not take away the thorn in the flesh, yet he saith, "My grace is sufficient for thee," and that comes to the same in the end. Lord Bolingbroke said to the Countess of Huntingdon, "I cannot understand, your ladyship, how you can make out earnest prayer to be consistent with submission to the divine will." "My lord," she said, "that is a matter of no difficulty. If I were a courtier of some generous king, and he gave me permission to ask any favor I pleased of him, I should be sure to put it thus, 'Will your majesty be graciously pleased to grant me such-and-such a favor; but at the same time though I very much desire it, if it would in any way detract from your majesty's honor, or if in your majesty's judgment it should seem better that I did not have this favor, I shall be quite as content to go without it as to receive it.' So you see I might earnestly offer a petition, and yet I might

submissively leave it in the king's hands." So with God. We never offer up prayer without inserting that clause, either in spirit or in words, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt; not my will but thine be done." We can only pray without an "if" when we are quite sure that our will must be God's will, because God's will is fully our will. A much-slandered poet has well said-

"Man, regard thy prayers as a purpose of love to thy soul, Esteem the providence that led to them as an index of God's good will; So shalt thou pray aright, and thy words shall meet with acceptance. Also, in pleading for others, be thankful for the fullness of thy prayer; For if thou art ready to ask, the Lord is more ready to bestow.

The salt preserveth the sea, and the saints uphold the earth; Their prayers are the thousand pillars that prop the canopy of nature. Verily, an hour without prayer, from some terrestrial mind, Were a curse in the calendar of time, a spot of the blackness of darkness. Perchance the terrible day, when the world must rock into ruins, Will be one unwhitened by prayer — shall He find faith on the earth? For there is an economy of mercy, as of wisdom, and power, and means;

Neither is one blessing granted unbesought from the treasury of good: And the charitable heart of the Being, to depend upon whom is happiness, Never withholdeth a bounty, so long as his subject prayeth; Yea, ask what thou wilt, to the second throne in heaven, It is thine, for whom it was appointed; there is no limit unto prayer: But and if thou cease to ask, tremble, thou self-suspended creature, For thy strength is cut off as was Samson's: and the hour of thy doom is come."

**III.** I come to our third point, which I think is full of encouragement to all those who exercise the hallowed art of prayer: ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITH, "I will shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not,"

Let us just remark that this was originally spoken to a prophet in prison; and, therefore, it applies in the first place to every teacher, and, indeed, as every teacher must be a learner, it has a bearing upon every learner in divine truth. The best way by which a prophet and teacher and learner can know the reserved truths, the higher and more mysterious truths of God, is by waiting upon God in prayer. I noticed very specially yesterday in reading the Book of the Prophet Daniel, how Daniel found out Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The soothsayers, the magicians, the astrologers

of the Chaldecs, brought out their curious books and their strange-looking instruments, and began to mutter their abracadabra and all sorts of mysterious incantations, but they all failed. What did Daniel do? He set himself to prayer, and knowing that the prayer of a united body of men has more prevalence than the prayer of one, we find that Daniel called together his brethren, and bade them unite with him in earnest prayer that God would be pleased of his infinite mercy to open up the vision. "Then Daniel went to his house and made the thing known to Hannriah, Mishaël, and Azariah, his companions, that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret, that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." And in the case of John, who was the Daniel of the New Testament, you remember he saw a book in the right hand of him that sat on the throne — a book sealed with seven seals which none was found worthy to open or to look thereon. What did John do? The book was by-and-by opened by the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, who had prevailed to open the book; but it is written first before the book was opened, "I wept much." Yes, and the tears of John which were his liquid prayers, were, as far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the folded book was opened.

Brethren in the ministry, you who are teachers in the Sabbath school, and all of you who are learners in the college of Christ Jesus, I pray you remember that prayer is your best means of study: like Daniel you shall understand the dream, and the interpretation thereof, when you have sought unto God; and like John you shall see the seven seals of precious truth unloosed, after that you have wept much. "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up the voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." Stones are not broken, except by an earnest use of the hammer; and the stone-breaker usually goes down on his knees. Use the hammer of diligence, and let the knee of prayer be exercised, too, and there is not a stony doctrine in Revelation which is useful for you to understand, which will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith. "Bene orasse est bene studuisse" was a wise sentence of Luther, which has been so often quoted, that we hardly venture but to hint at it. "To have prayed well is to have studied well." You may force your way through anything with the leverage of prayers. Thoughts and reasoning may be like the steel wedges which may open a way into truth; but prayer is the lever, the prise which forces



open the iron chest of sacred mystery, that we may get the treasure that is hidden therein for those who can force their way to reach it. The kingdom of heaven still suffereth violence, and the violent taketh it by force. Take care that we work away with the mighty implement of prayer, and nothing can stand against you.

We must not, however, stop there. We have applied the text to only one case; it is applicable to a hundred. We single out another. The saint may expect to discover deeper experience and to know more of the higher spiritual life, by being much in prayer. There are different translations of my text. One version renders it, "I will show thee great and fortified things which thou knowest not." Another reads it, "Great and reserved things which thou knowest not." Now, all the developments of spiritual life are not alike easy of attainment. There are the common frames and feelings of repentance, and faith, and joy, and hope, which are enjoyed by the entire family: but there is an upper realm of rapture, of communion, and conscious union with Christ, which is far from being the common dwelling-place of believers. All believers see Christ; but all believers do not put their fingers into the prints of the nails, nor thrust their hand into his side. We have not till the high privilege of John to lean upon Jesus' bosom, nor of Paul, to be caught up into the third heaven. In the ark of salvation we find a lower, second, and third storey; all are in the ark, but all are not in the same storey. Most Christians, as to the river of experience, are only up to the ankles; some others have waded till the stream is up to the knees; a few find it breast-high; and but a few — oh! how few! — find it a river to swim in, the bottom of which they cannot touch. My brethren, there are heights in experimental knowledge of the things of God which the eagle's eye of acumen and philosophic thought hath never seen; and there are secret paths which the lion's whelp of reason and judgment hath not as yet learned to travel. God alone can bear us there; but the chariot in which he takes us up, and the fiery steeds with which that chariot is dragged, are prevailing prayers. Prevailing prayer is victorious over the God of mercy "By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us." Prevailing prayer takes the Christian to Carmel, and enables him to cover heaven with clouds of blessing, and earth with floods of mercy. Prevailing prayer bears the Christian aloft to Pisgah and shows him the inheritance reserved; ay, and it elevates him to Tabor and transfigures him, till in the likeness of his Lord, as he is, so are we also

in this world. If you would reach to something higher than ordinary grovelling experience, look to the Rock that is higher than you, and look with the eye of faith through the windows of importunate prayer. To grow in experience then, there must be much prayer.

You must have patience with me while I apply this text to two or three more cases. It is certainly true of the sufferer under trial: if he waits upon God in prayer much he shall receive greater deliverances than he has ever dreamed of — “great and mighty things which thou knowest not.” Here is Jeremiah’s testimony: — “Thou drowest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.” And David’s is the same: — “I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place....I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.” And yet again:—“Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.” “My husband is dead,” said the poor woman, “and my creditor is come to take my two sons as bondsmen.” She hoped that Elijah would possibly say “What are your debts? I will pay them.” Instead of that, he multiplies her oil till it is written, “Go thou and pay thy debts, and” — what was the “and?” — “live thou and thy children upon the rest.” So often it will happen that God will not only help his people through the miry places of the way, so that they may just stand on the other side of the slough, but he will bring them safely far on the journey. That was a remarkable miracle, when in the midst of the storm, Jesus Christ came walking upon the sea, the disciples received him into the ship, and not only was the sea calm, but it is recorded, “Immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.” That was a mercy over and above what they asked. I sometimes hear you pray and make use of a quotation which is not in the Bible: — “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or even think.” It is not so written in the Bible. I do not know what we can ask or what we can think. But it is said, “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think.” Let us then, dear friends, when we are in great trial only say, “Now I am in prison; like Jeremiah I will pray as he did, for I have God’s command to do it; and I will look out as he did, expecting that he will show me reserved mercies which I know nothing of at present.” He will not merely bring his people through the battle, covering their heads in it, but he will bring them forth with banners waving, to divide the spoil with

the mighty, and to claim their portion with the strong. Expect great things of a God who gives such great promises as these.

Again, here is encouragement for the worker. Most of you are doing something for Christ; I am happy to be able to say this, knowing that I do not flatter you. My dear friends, wait upon God much in prayer, and you have the promise that he will do greater things for you than you know of. We know not how much capacity for usefulness there may be in us. That ass's jaw-bone lying there upon the earth, what can it do? Nobody knows what it can do. It gets into Samson's hands, what can it not do? No one knows what it cannot do now that a Samson wields it. And you, friend, have often thought yourself to be as contemptible as that bone, and you have said, "What can I do?" Ay, but when Christ by his Spirit grips you, what can you not do? Truly you may adopt Paul's language and say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." However, do not depend upon prayer without effort. In a certain school there was one girl who knew the Lord, a very gracious, simple-hearted, trustful child. As usual, grace developed itself in the child according to the child's position. Her lessons were always best said of any in the class. Another girl said to her, "How is it that your lessons are always so well said?" "I pray God to help me," she said, "to learn my lesson." Well thought the other, "Then I will do the same." The next morning when she stood up in the class she knew nothing; and when she was in disgrace she complained to the other, "Why I prayed God to help me learn my lesson and I do not know anything of it. What is the use of prayer?" "But did you sit down and try to learn it?" "Oh, no," she said, "I never looked at the book." "Ah," then said the other, "I asked God to help me to learn my lesson; but, I then sat down to it studiously, and I kept at it till I knew it well, and I learned it easily, because my earnest desire, which I had expressed to God was, help me to be diligent in endeavoring to do my duty." So is it with some who come up to prayer-meetings and pray, and then they fold their arms and go away hoping that God's work will go on. Like the negro woman singing "Fly a broad, thou mighty gospel," but not putting a penny in the plate; so that her friend touched her and said, "But how can it fly if you don't give it wings to fly with?" There be many who appear to be very mighty in prayer, wonderous in supplications; but then they require God to do what they can do themselves, and, therefore, God does nothing at all for them. "I shall leave my camel untied," said an Arab once to Mahomet, "and trust to providence." "Tie it up said Mahomet, "and then trust to providence." So

you that say, "I shall pray and trust my Church, or my class, or my work to God's goodness," may rather hear the voice of experience and wisdom which says, "Do thy best; work as if all rested upon thy toil; as if thy own aim would bring thy salvation;" "and when thou hast done all, cast thy self on him without whom it is in vain to rise up early and to sit up late, and to eat the bread of carefulness; and if he speed thee give him the praise."

I shall not detain you many minutes longer, but I want to notice that this promise ought to prove useful for the comforting of those who are intercessors for others. You who are calling upon God to save your children, to bless your neighbors, to remember your husbands or your wives in mercy, may take comfort from this, "I will shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." A celebrated minister in the last century, one Mr. Bailey, was the child of a godly mother. This mother had almost ceased to pray for her husband, who was a man of a most ungodly stamp, and a bitter persecutor. The mother prayed for her boy, and while he was yet eleven or twelve years of age, eternal mercy met with him. So sweetly instructed was the child in the things of the kingdom of God, that the mother requested him — and for some time he always did so — to conduct family prayer in the house. Morning and evening this little one laid open the Bible; and though the father would not deign to stop for the family prayer, yet on one occasion he was rather curious to know "what sort of an out the boy would make of it," so he stopped on the other side of the door, and God blessed the prayer of his own child under thirteen years of age to his conversion, said, The mother might well have read my text with streaming eyes and said, "Yes, Lord, thou hast shewn me great and mighty things which I knew not: thou hast not only saved my boy, but through my boy thou hast brought my husband to the truth." You cannot guess how greatly God will bless you. Only go and stand at his door, you cannot tell what is in reserve for you. If you do not beg at all, you will get nothing; but if you beg he may not only give you, as it were, the bones, and broken meat, but he may say to the servant at his table, "Take thou that dainty meat, and set that before the poor man." Ruth went to glean; she expected to get a few good ears: but Boaz said, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and rebuke her not;" he said moreover to her, "At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar." Nay, she found a husband where she only expected to find a handful of barley. So in prayer for others, God may give us such mercies that we shall be astounded at them, since we expected but little. Hear what is said of

Job, and learn its lesson, “And the Lord said, My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job....And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.”

Now, this word to close with. Some of you are seekers for your own conversion. God has quickened you to solemn prayer about your own souls. You are not content to go to hell, you want heaven; you want washing in the precious blood; you want eternal life. Dear friends, I pray you take this text — God himself speaks it to you — “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” At once take God at his word. Get home, go into your chamber and shut the door, and try him. Young man, I say, try the Lord. Young woman, prove him, see whether he be true or not. If God be true, you cannot seek mercy at his hands through Jesus Christ and get a negative reply. He must, for his own promise and character bind him to it, open mercy’s gate to you who knock with all your heart. God help you, believing in Christ Jesus, to cry aloud unto God, and his answer of peace is already on the way to meet you. You shall hear him say, “Your sins which are many are all forgiven.”

The Lord bless you for his love’s sake. Amen.

NOTE. — In a former sermon, while denouncing the error of the “Non-confession of sin by believers,” we wrongly imputed that gross heresy to the Plymouth Brethren. We have since learned that the persons to whom we alluded have been expelled from that body, and we therefore desire to exonerate the community from a fault of which they are not guilty. We are sorry to have made this charge, as it is far from our wish to speak evil of any, but we were not aware of the expulsion of the guilty persons.

# A WARNING AGAINST HARDNESS OF HEART.

NO. 620

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 19TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” — Hebrews 3:13.*

THE children of Israel in their coming out of Egypt, and in their forty years' sojourn in the wilderness, represented the visible Church of the living God; not the secret and elect body of the redeemed, but the professing company of the outward Church. They were very prone to the great sin of unbelief. They believed in God after a fashion while they saw his wonders, but the moment they were brought into straits or difficulties, they at once began to doubt the power or Jehovah, and to cast off all reverence for his authority. Hence they fell into another sin which at last fastened on them so as to become a part of their nature, they became stiff-necked, obstinate, rebellious, perverse, and hard of heart. They would not learn, although their lesson-book had miracles for its pictures. Their hearts became so hard that albeit they saw all the great things which God did for them, they despised the pleasant land, and were ready at times for the sake of the flesh-pots of Egypt, to wear again the yoke of Pharaoh, and to die the inglorious death of slaves. Such, too, are the great sins of the Christian Church, unbelief the root, and obstinacy the fruit. Brethren and sisters, if we know our own hearts, we must confess that unbelief is a sin which doth very easily beset us, and that our obstinacy may well provoke the Lord to anger. We rejoice in God while the rocks run with rivers, and while the daily manna drops about our tents; but when the fiery serpent bites us, or the wells are bitter, or our comforts are in any way interfered with, we begin to distrust and to suspect the faithfulness of God; and, as the result

of this, there is ail obstinacy about us which often inclines us to stand out against the plain precepts of God, because, forsooth, in the judgment of our unbelief, obedience might lead us into trouble, and disobedience might make our path smooth. Oh that it were not, too sadly true that God's people are liable to be overtaken by the worst of sins! Egypt itself did not produce worse sins than those which provoked the Lord to anger in the camp of Israel, and to this day the Church has some in it who defile her with all the sins of the world. I do not mean to insinuate that the Church of God is not infinitely to be preferred to the world in character; God forbid that I should slander the fair bride of Christ, she is as much superior to the world as the curtains of Solomon excel the smoke blacked tents of Kedar; but who dares deny that there are specimens to be found of the worst of sins occurring among the best of men, just as in the most carefully tended garden there will spring up here and there some of the most noxious weeds: not that the weeds are permitted to smother the whole garden and kill the flowers, but that their coming there while men sleep, is an indication of what the soil is, and a plain manifestation that although the garden is very different from the piece of waste ground on the other side the wall, yet it differs not in nature, but owes all its superiority to the culture of the husbandman, even as the saints owe all their excellence above the very chief of sinners to the guardian care and omnipotent grace of the great lover of souls.

It seems, dear friends, that it is really necessary to warn God's people, although they have received the new nature, and are partakers of the adoption, against being hardened in heart through the deceitfulness of sin, and that there is a machinery provided by which the saints may be preserved from this great evil. "Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

We will talk together thus this morning. First, we shall dwell for a season upon the hardening effect of sin upon men, whether saints or sinners; then we shall show the peculiar power by which sin hardens, namely, through its deceitfulness; then we will consider the remedy which we are to use with others — "Exhort one another daily;" but what if we should be diseased ourselves with this same hardness of heart? then it will be needful for us to have a few words concerning what to do for ourselves, if we have to complain of a growing insensibility of Spirit, as I am afraid some of us may most justly do.

## I. First, then, dear friends, THE HARDENING CHARACTER OF SIN.

This is matter of experience. The first sin which came into the world hardened man's heart in a most terrific manner, so that he dared to excuse himself and even to charge God as being indirectly the author of his sin, by giving him the woman. No sooner had Adam tasted of the forbidden fruit, than a stony hardness came upon his moral nature; the heart of sensitive flesh was suddenly petrified, and became hard unfeeling stone; he no longer shrank from the thought of sin, but tried to hide himself from the presence of his best friend. He felt his nakedness in some degree, but that which made him naked he did not lament or even confess before his God. He would never have been content with an apron of fig leaves, if he had known the full measure of his degradation. His unborn children in that dread hour participated in his fall, and are now born into the world with a stone in their hearts. Man's heart, naturally, is like that of Leviathan, of which the Lord says, "It is as firm as a stone, yea, hard as a piece of the nether millstone" — the lower stone of the two in the handmill was always chosen on account of its peculiar hardness. Still, hard as the heart is by nature, it may grow harder by practice and by association with sin, even as Zechariah writes of sinners in his day, "Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law" (Zechariah 7:12). There is no doubt whatever that living among sinners has a hardening tendency upon men. You cannot walk about in this great lazarus-house, without receiving some contagion. Though you were pure in heart, unless you had the absolute perfection and Godhead of Christ Jesus to protect you, the prince of this world would make you his prey. It were hard to dwell in so foul a world as this without contracting some impurity. Those black coals which fill this earthly cellar if they will not burn us, will at least blacken us. When so many fires of sin are pouring forth their smoke, the whitest of linen cannot escape the falling blacks. If "the thought of foolishness is sin," and we have divine authority for so judging, then even to think of sin exercises a polluting influence. Can I read a description of another man's sin without getting my heart hardened? I query if reading the daily reports of crime in the police news is not a very fertile cause of sin. Great crimes usually produce their like in congenial winds, and even in the purest hearts their recital cannot but have an injurious effect. The tree of knowledge of good and evil bears dangerous fruit; it were well if we restrained our curiosity, and left foul deeds alone, unknown, unread by us. What good can come from turning over the foul dunghill of crime? Let those traverse our sewers



whose business it is to do so; were it not better for the most of us to keep out of them. Those who are called in providence to deal daily with the coarser sins had need to set a special watch over themselves lest they fall by little and little. Let me here remark that the sins of God's people are peculiarly operative in this manner. If I see a drunkard intoxicated, I am simply shocked at him, but I am not likely to imitate his example; but if I see the same vice in a man whom I respect, and whose example has hitherto been to me the guide of my life, I may be greatly grieved at first, but the tendency of my mind will be to make an excuse for him; and when one has succeeded in framing a plausible excuse for the sin of another, it is very natural to use it on one's own behalf. Association with inconsistent Christians has been the downfall of many young believers. The devil delights to use God's own birds as a decoy for his nets. "I could not have thought it," says the young Christian, "that men whom I esteemed as saints would have acted so." "Well, well," is the next reflection, "if these are good men, and go to heaven, and yet act so ill, then I need not be so precise;" and thus, by a course of reasoning which sin makes as easy as casting up accounts by a ready reckoner, we arrive at the conclusion, that perhaps what we avoided as a sin, may have been no sin at all, and we therefore indulge in it without stint, and step by step come down to the level of this evil generation. He who handles edged tools, is apt to cut his fingers, and none the less so because the knife is made of the best steel. Let us walk warily among men, like a man with naked feet when going over thorny ground, lest our hurt be grievous.

I am fearful that even preaching against sin may have an injurious effect upon the preacher. I frankly confess, my brethren, that there is a tendency with those of us who have to speak upon these themes, to treat them professionally, rather than to make application of them to ourselves; and thus we lose our dread of evil in some degree, just as young doctors soon lose their tender nervousness in the dissecting-room. We are compelled in our office to see ten thousand things which at first are heart-breakers to us. In our young ministry, when we meet with hypocrisy and inconsistency, we are ready to lie down and die; but the tendency in after years is to take these terrible evils as matters of course. Wordliness, covetousness, and carnality, shock us most at the outset of our work: is not this a sad sign that even God's ministers may feel the hardening effect of sin? I daily feel that the atmosphere of earth has as much a tendency to harden my heart as to harden plaster which is newly spread upon the wall; and unless I am

baptized anew with the Spirit of God, and constantly stand at the foot of the cross, reading the curse of sin in the crimson hieroglyphics of my Savior's dying agonies, I shall become as steeled and insensible as the mass of professors already are. I cannot enter at length into the whole matter, but let me trace the gradual process of hardening of heart which may take place in a measure in a true Christian, but in its full extent in the mere professor whose religion lacks the inward vital principle. You must understand that the hardening of a tender conscience is a gradual process, something like the covering of a pond with ice on a frosty night. At first you can scarcely see that freezing is going on at all. There are certain signs which a thoroughly practiced eye may be able to detect as prognostics of ice, but the most of us would see nothing. By and bye, there is ice, but it would scarcely support a pin. If you should place a needle upon it ever so gently, it would fall through. In due time you perceive a thin coating which might sustain a pebble, and anon a child trips merrily over it, and if old winter holds his court long enough, it may be that a loaded waggon may be driven over the frozen lake, or a whole army may march without fear across the stream. There may be no rapid congelation at any one moment, and yet the freezing is complete enough in the end. Apostates and great backsliders do not reach their worst at one bound. The descent to hell is sometimes a precipice, but far oftener a smooth and gentle slope. It were hard to find out in the worst of men exactly when they were utterly given up to judicial blindness. It is often a long and laborious process by which conscience is completely seared. This dreadful work usually begins thus, the man's first carefulness and tenderness departs. When you were, first converted, you felt afraid to put one foot down before another, for fear you should go astray. You scarcely ever ventured from your house without a anxiety to be kept by the grace of God. You used to pray in the morning with great ardor and earnestness that not a thought might be awry, not one single word amiss; and, when business was over at night, you felt, uneasy, lest in anything however trivial, you might have injured your profession and grieved the Spirit of God. Well do I recollect when I was the subject of excessive tenderness — some people called it "morbid sensibility." How I shuddered and shivered at the very thought of sin which then appeared exceedingly sinful. I would to God I could always feel as I then did. O believer, your new-born character was then white as the lily, and the smallest grain of dust would show upon it; your life was bright and shining, and the least speck would be discovered, and you yourself were like the sensitive plant, the slightest touch of sin sent a thrill of horror through

every fibre of your soul: but it is not so now, at least not to the same admirable degree. It may be you can hear talk to which formerly you would have closed your ears; you can tolerate sins which once you would have shunned as though they were deadly serpents. Your walk is somewhat careless now; great sins you avoid right heedfully, but secret sin gives you little or no concern. The departure of that blessed sensibility of soul which marks the new birth is one very serious mark of declension. It may not seem a great evil to have less abhorrence of evil, but this truly is the egg from which the worst mischief may come. Hear me attentively, O my brother, to whom this message is directed, when I rebuke thee in the words of the Savior in the Revelation, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

The next distressing sign of growing hardness is increasing neglect or laxity of private devotion, without any corresponding shock of the spiritual sensibilities on account of it. The daily prayer will become shorter and shorter, if not irregular; occasionally the period allotted to the reading of the Word will be given to business or worldly pleasure, and perhaps frequently forgotten and neglected. It may peradventure have happened at the first that on some occasion we could not conveniently read the Scriptures according to our wont, and our prayers were necessarily shortened, but then we sought to make up for the loss at the first opportunity, and we felt like men who having been cut short at their meals, must needs eat the more freely next time. But now I am afraid these things become common with some professors, and they scarcely care to invent an excuse for their slackness in divine things. O what poor pleas do some men offer for deserting their closets! How unjustly may unread Bibles accuse those pretenders to grace who treat them so ill! Alas, brethren, we may look each other in the face and few of us can plead “Guiltless.” Divine Spirit, help us to awake out of sleep, and to shake off this deadly lethargy.

Another symptom of increasing callousness of heart, is the fact that hidings of the Savior’s face do not cause that acute and poignant sorrow which they produced in former times. Ah, my soul recollects when she walked in the full blaze of Jesus’ love; when the very thought of his turning his face away seemed like the chill blast of winter nipping the summer-flowers of my soul. Then I sang —

*“Thy shining face can cheer,  
This dungeon where I dwell  
‘Tis paradise if thou art here,  
If thou depart ‘tis hell.”*

I have sometimes walked in darkness, and have seen no light; and I confess deep shame and profound sorrow that I have occasionally been half indifferent whether Jesus shone forth or no. The spouse who fondly loves her husband longs for his return, if he be absent; a long protracted separation from her Lord is a semi-death to her spirit: and so with souls who love the Savior much. they must see his face, they cannot bear that he should be away upon the mountains of Bether, and no more hold communion with them. A child that is full of love to its parent cannot endure a frown. An angry pat is heavy, a stroke cuts to the very heart. A reproaching look, a glance of rebuke, an uplifted finger will be grievous to good and loving Children, who fear to offend their tender father, and are only happy in his smile. Oh, beloved, it was so once with you. A text of Scripture, a threatening, a touch of the rod of affliction, and you went to your Father’s feet, crying, “Show me wherefore thou contendest with me?” Is it so now? Are you content to follow Jesus afar off? Content to be a wanderer from your Father’s house? Can you contemplate suspended communion with Christ without alarm? Can you bear to have your Beloved walking contrary to you, because you walk contrary to him? Have your sins separated between you and your God, and is your heart at rest? O my beloved brother, let me affectionately and even tearfully warn you, for it is a grievous token of hardness of heart when we can live contentedly without the present enjoyment of the Savior’s face.

Still further, when the soul is hardened to this extent, it is probable that sin will no longer cause such grief as it once did. Brother, you remember how you humbled yourself before, God with many fears, when in your former days you felt that you had made a slip in your conversation. You could not sleep that night. Even that precious promise, which you tried to lay hold of, could hardly quiet your agitated mind. You bemoaned yourself most piteously, crying out upon your bed, “I have dishonored the Lord that bought me, I have been false to my profession and my love to Jesus.” Your spirit had no rest even on the next day, nor could time assuage your bitterness of grief; it was only when the Savior had by his sweet consolations and the application of his precious blood effectually purged your conscience, that your soul at last had rest. My brother, it may be you

have lately sinned far worse than you did then, but you do not smart half so severely. Your life is not so pure as it once was, but still your heart is quite as peaceful, for an evil spirit whispers, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." Dr. Preston tells us of a professor, who on one occasion was found drunk; and when much depressed on account of his folly, the devil said to him by way of temptation, "Do it again, do it again," for said he, "the grief you feel about it now, you will never feel any more if you commit the sin again." Dr. Preston says that the man yielded to the temptation, and from that time he never did feel the slightest regret at his drunkenness, and lived and died a confirmed sot, though formerly he had been a very high professor. Take special heed of the second sin if thou hast already fallen into the first, for that second fall may most effectually prevent thy repenting and returning to the right way, for habit will take thee as in an iron net, and hold thee fast to be dragged down with other hypocrites like thee, to the lowest depths of hell. It is a sad sign of coming declension, nay, of decline already come, when we can talk of sin lightly, make excuses for it, or make jokes about it; when we can see it in others without sorrow, and in ourselves without the greatest shame.

The next stop in this ladder, down, down, down to destruction, is that sin thus causing less grief, is indulged in more freely. The man had fallen the first time, the second time he deliberately lies down; the first time he was overtaken in a fault, the second time he overtakes the fault and runs after the sin; the first time he was a victim, the second time he is most willingly given up to it; the first time he drank the cup by mistake, or by a kind of compulsion, but the second time he comes to a feast like that of Ahasuerus, where none do compel, and yet he rejoices to be a ringleader in rioting: first he sipped, but now, like the ox, he drinks by the bucketful; at first he carried only a spark in his bosom, but now he bears a whole brazier of burning coals and cries that it is sport. The man may not be ripe enough yet for outward sins under the immediate eye of the world — the probability is that he keeps his iniquities private. He eats the bread of sin in secret. He drinks, but no one calls him drunkard, because it is done at home. He commits lust, but no one charges him with it, because he carefully conceals his tracks, and indulges himself only when he is out of sight of his fellows. He robs in business, but no one can detect it; perhaps even the ledger does not show it — there is a particular way of making ends meet in dishonesty, by which a tradesman may be a gross thief, and continue to be so, and yet by putting a gloss on matters, can maintain his repute, and be considered

honest. Into such a state of heart I fear that even some of God's children may for a time be suffered to fall, but the far greater probability is that those who descend so low are hypocrites, and know not the grace of God in truth. I pray God we may never prove by experience how nearly an heir of heaven may become like a child of wrath.

After this there is still a greater hardening of heart — the man comes to dislike rebukes. He has sinned so long, and yet he has been held in such respect in the Christian Church, that if you give half-a-hint about his sin, he looks at you with a sharp look as if you were insulting him; he is not to be talked to or spoken with — he has been taken for a flaming professor so many years that he is not to be suspected now. You may rebuke the sins of the congregation and he will be gratified if you do not make too particular an application. You may declaim against his sin in public, but woe unto the friend who shall be daring enough to give a private admonition. The more a man loves his sin and needs rebuke, the more heartily will he hate the person who, with the best of motives, lays it at his door. Mark this word, if this hardening work goes on, the day at last comes to such a man that the Word of God loses all effect upon him, whether he reads it or bears it, it ceases to be an accusing voice any longer; rather he finds a song of lullaby in it, and rocked in the cradle of his sin he sleeps on to his own eternal ruin. You say, "Can a child of God come as far as this?" I believe not, my brethren, but I am speaking now of professors at large; professors may. Professors have at last learned to sleep over the mouth of hell, and dream of heaven while damnation is denounced upon them. I fear that some here are as easy under the thunders of God's law as the blacksmith's dog under the sound of his master's hammer with the sparks flying about him. Some of you have heard the gospel so long and have made a profession of being saved so long, that being still unconverted, there is now little hope of you. The gospel has no power over you, you know it so well and love it so little. If your character could be photographed, you would not acknowledge it. If we preach against hypocrisy, hypocrites say, "Admirable! admirable!" If we deal out threatenings against secret sin, secret sinners fee! a little twinge, but forget it all and say, "An excellent discourse." They have hardened their neck against God's Word, have made their brows like flints, and their hearts adamant stones, and now they might just as well stay away from the house of God as not, for there is but little hope that the Word will ever be blest to them, their soul has become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. And yet would I have them keep

from the means of grace? No, for with God nothing is impossible; the sovereign grace of God may yet step in, and he who hath power to heal may yet in the mighty majesty of his love speak to the heart of stone, and make it gush forth with rivers of repentance like the rock in the wilderness of old.

## **II.** We come, in the second place, to notice THE PECULIAR POWER WHICH LIES IN SIN TO HARDEN THE HEART.

It is the deceitfulness of sin. The heart is deceitful, and sin is deceitful; and when these two deceitful ones lay their heads together to make up a case, there is no wonder if man, like a silly dove, is taken in their net. One of the first ways in which sin deceives the professor is by saving, "You see no hurt has come of it. The thing is hid: nobody has mentioned it to the Church-officers; it is not, known among the members, in fact, nobody has heard it — you may as well enjoy yourself as not. You are not doing any mischief — if there is anything wrong it is confined to yourself. "Really," says sin, "I cannot see that you are any the worse. You preached quite as well last Sunday; you prayed quite as well at the prayer-meeting and as far as the family-altar is concerned, there was not much difference there; evidently sin has not hurt you: do it again; do it again." Forgetting that the immediate results of sin are not always apparent in this world, and that if hardness of heart be not apparent it is all the more real; for if a man could perceive the hardness of his own heart, it would be pretty good evidence that it was somewhat softened. Then sin will whisper next, "This would be sin in other people, but it is not in you. You see you were placed in a peculiar position; there is indulgence for you which could not be accorded to other men: you are young," says sin, "nobody could accuse you if you did go a little rashly to work — if you were all older professor it would be very wrong." Then if it is an old man who is to be deceived, sin will cry, "You must take care of yourself; you need more indulgence than others." If a man be in private life, sin will then suggest, "It does not matter in you; it would be wrong in a deacon, or any other Church-officer, but nobody knows it in your case." If it be some person in high repute, then sin whispers, "Your character is so well established, it will bear it." There is a way in which you can look at things and see them as they are not; sin knows how to use the distorting glass so that a man will turn round on this side and condemn his fellow for a sin, and call him some black name, and then he will turn to the other side and commit the same sin himself, and, like the adulterous woman in the Proverbs, he will wipe his mouth and say

“I have done no wickedness.” Sin, if it cannot deceive in this way, will beguile its victim by insinuating, “Now this is a dangerous thing for others to do, but in your case, you have so much prudence, and have acquired so much experience, that you can stop when you reach a certain point. I know,” says sin, “young So-and-so was ruined by frequenting such-and-such places, but you may go in and out of the same doors, because you have so much discretion. It would be dangerous to expose your son to such a temptation, and of course you would not like the Church should know that you go there, but still, really you are a person so well established, and you know the world so thoroughly, that you may do without the slightest hurt what others may not even dream of.” It is a great and grievous lie as we ought to know, that sin can ever be touched without injury, but yet this sufficeth for many — “I will go to the verge of the precipice, I will look down, I will get the delicious feeling of the sublimity of danger, and then will start back. I will mix up with bad company sufficiently to know its evils. I would not go over the line for all the world, I shall be sure to stop just on this side of it.” Such boasters remind one of that simple story of the lady who wanted a coachman. When three applied, she had them in one by one. “Well,” said she to the first, “How near can you drive to danger?” “Madam,” said he, “I believe I could drive within a foot without fear.” “You will not do for me” said she. To the second she said, “How near could you drive to danger?” “Within a hair’s breadth, Madam,” said he, “and yet, you would be perfectly safe.” “You will not suit me,” said she. The third came in, and when asked the same question “How near could you drive to danger?” he said, “Please Ma’am, I never tried, I always drive as far off as ever I can.” Such should the Christian act. Some, through the deceitfulness of sin, are always trying how near they can go to the edge, so as not to fall over; how near they can sail to the rock, and not dash upon it; how much sin they can indulge in, and yet remain respected Church members. Shame on us, that any of us should be guilty of such tampering with that accursed thing which slew the Lord of glory.

Again, sin will sometimes have the impudence to say, “It is very easy to repent of it. If you have once plunged into the mire, you can at any time see the evil of it, and you have only to repent, and straightway there is forgiveness.” This vile traitor is even dastardly enough to take the doctrines of grace, and turn them into a reason for sin. The old serpent hisses out, as none but the devil dare do, “God will not cast you off; he never casts away his people. He can soon visit you in mercy, and lift you



up to the highest state of spirituality; though you may have fallen into the lowest condition of degradation. You run no risks as others would; for the eternal purpose of God is engaged to keep you from final perdition, and therefore you may drink the deadly thing, and it shall not hurt you; and tread upon serpents, and they shall not bite you.” “Their damnation is just,” says the apostle, of those who use the doctrines of grace its an argument for licentiousness. The child of God scorns the thought of making the love of God a reason for sin. When a little boy was tempted to steal from an orchard, the others said to him, “You my safely do it; your father is so fond of you, that he will not beat you.” “No, no,” said the little fellow, “that is the very reason why I would not go a thieving, for I should grieve my father, who is so kind and so good to me.” Yet the deceitfulness of sin is such that it will turn the strongest motive for holiness into an argument for rebellion against God. My dear friends, I feel the weight of this subject pressing down my own heart; and for that very reason I cannot bring out these truths as I would desire, so as to make them flash into your faces; but I do feel that it must be true of some of you who make a profession of religion, that sin, through its deceitfulness, is tampering with your spirits, trying to make you traitors to God: seeking, if it possibly can, to pervert your mind from hatred of sin, and from true love to Jesus, Christ.

### **III.** I pass on, however, to hint at THE REMEDY WHICH IS PROVIDED IN THE TEXT FOR US TO USE WITH OTHERS.

“Exhort one another,” and we are told when to do it — “daily,” and when to begin to do it — “while it is called to-day.” Doubtless many professors would be saved from gross sins if mutual exhortation were more commonly practiced in the churches of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. This duty belongs primarily to the pastor and to Church officers. We are set in the church to see after the good of the people, and it is our business both in public and in private, as far as we have opportunity, to exhort daily; and especially where we see any coldness creeping over men, where there begins to be a decline in the ways of God, it is our duty to be most earnest in exhortation. The duty belongs to you all, “Exhort one another daily.” Parents should be careful concerning their children in this matter. You act not the part of a true father unless you see to your son whether he be in church-membership or not, that upon the slightest inconsistency he receives a gentle word of rebuke from you. Ye matrons in Israel, you are not true mothers of the Church unless you look after the young sisters to keep them out of sin. Sunday-school teachers, this is peculiarly your work

with reward to your own classes. In this Church, so many have been brought out of the school into the Church, that I may insist the more earnestly upon this duty. Watch over your children, not only that they may be converted, but that after being converted they may be as watered gardens, no plants withering, but all the graces of the Spirit coming to perfection through your care. Here is work for the elders among us. Ye whose grey heads betoken years of experience, and whose years of experience ought to have given you wisdom and knowledge, you may use the superiority which age affords you to offer a word of exhortation, lovingly and tenderly to the young. You can speak as those of us who are younger cannot speak, for you can tell what you have tasted and have handled; perhaps you can even tell where you have smarted by reason of your own faults and follies. All of you without exception, whether you be rich or poor, see to each others' souls; say not, "Am I my brother's keeper?" but seek ye your brother's good for edification. I do hope there will be a larger degree of sociality among the members of this Church than ever, although hitherto I have had no cause of complaint. Some Churches never can practice mutual exhortation because the members do not know each other; the members are lumps of ice floating about, huge ice-blocks without connection with one another; it ought not to be so: the very fact of Church membership, drinking of the same cup, eating of the same bread, it seems to me, entitles every man to admonish, and to be admonished, nay, makes it the imperative duty of every such person to see that he careth for the soul of his fellow. I would not abolish social distinctions, God forbid! they ever must exist, I believe, at least till the Lord comes; but in the, Church of God, membership and brotherhood should, at least when you come together here, override all social distinctions; and as in Cromwell's army, the private might often be heard around the camp fire talking to the major, and the subaltern taking it upon him to rebuke the colonel, so should it be among us; we should feel that we are one in Christ Jesus, that while we regard distinctions among men in civil life, yet in spiritual things we so care for each other's good, and so desire the edification of the entire body of Christ, that we watch over one another carefully and prayerfully, and exhort one another daily. In such a Church as this there is peculiar need of it. What can we, a handful of Church officers, do among three thousand of you. If you do not exercise oversight over one another, what can be done? I thank God the duty is not altogether neglected, but I would stimulate, you to a greater diligence in the exercise of it. You know of some other, perhaps, who is going back; do not tell anybody else, ro

privately yourself to him. You know of a sister whose spiritual life is in a decline; do not talk to your neighbors, or even at first communicate with us about it, but labor to get your own heart right, and then seek to restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, remembering, thyself lest thou also be tempted. If we do not do this, we shall as a Church suffer great dishonor. It is unavoidable in so many but that we should be troubled with some hypocrites. How can our Church be kept right, instrumentally, except by much watchfulness? We do not wish to be dishonored, we do not desire by great falls to grieve the name of Christ; then let us watch over one another. It is so pleasant and so blessed to restore a brother from the error or his ways, that I can offer you no greater reward than these two, to screen the name of Christ from shame, and to have the pleasure of saving a soul from death and covering a multitude of sins.

#### **IV.** Lastly, SUPPOSE THIS TO BE THE CASE WITH ANY ONE OF US, WHAT THEN?

We cannot very well, as a rule, ask a brother to exhort us when we feel conscious of insensibility, although it were well if some dear friend could be trusted to give us every now and then a solemn admonition. Some of us are in such a position that we are not very likely to be exhorted, we are keepers of the vineyard, and have none who would take upon themselves to admonish us. Our enemies, however, very ably supply the lack, for they often tell us very profitable, but very unpleasant truths, which do us a deal of good, and they are never restrained by any fear of hurting our feelings. We have great reason to thank God for some men's enmity, it was the only way in which they could serve us. Failing this-and private Christians miss this bitter medicine — what is to be done? Suppose we have begun to flag? what is to be done? Shall I say "Suppose?" come, pass the question round, dear friends. Is it not true with too many of us, that we are growing careless and insensible! Do I not hear some honest hearts cry, "There is no supposition in the case, we have already gone back." Public services to some of you have grown dull, compared with what they used to be, and yet the preacher is the same! Prayer meetings you scarce attend, or if you are there, your hearts are not on fire with vehement longings after your God; private prayer drags heavily; Bible reading is almost given up; communion with Christ is becoming a thing of the past; holy joys and divine ecstasies, things which you have read of and heard about, but do not enjoy yourselves! May it not be so with you! I feel sometimes as if I could be cut in my heart with a sword, I would bless the sword, so long as I could but

smart and bleed under it. Oh, it is a horrible thing, an accursed thing, to abide in a state of insensibility! Oh, for heartbreaking! To have a heart broken thoroughly would be a blessing; ay, to be driven to despair might be an enviable thing, rather than not to feel at all. I will not, therefore, say “Suppose,” but I will say it is so with a great many. Then what had we better do? My brethren, let us labor to feel what an evil thing this is — little love to our own dying Savior, little joy in our precious Jesus, little fellowship with our spiritual and wellbeloved husband, our Lord, our covenant Head. Be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Cover your faces, men and brethren, and let boasting be put away. Put on sackcloth! Heap ashes on your heads! Hold a true Lent in your souls, while you sorrow over your hardness of heart. Do not stop at sorrow! Remember where you first received salvation. Go at once to the cross. There, and there only, can you get your spirit quickened. There hangs the Savior! There was life in him ten ears, twenty years ago, when you first looked; there is life in him still. If your experience should seem to you to have been a delusion, and your faith to have been presumption, Christ is a Savior still. He came into the world to save sinners, and if you are not a saint, you are a sinner; go to him as such. Let us, my brethren, begin again. Let us go to the starting point. Let us lay again the fundamentals. Let us sing —

*“Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidst me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come!”*

No matter how hard, how insensible, how dead we may have become, let us go again in all the rags, and poverty, and defilement of our natural condition, and throw ourselves flat on our faces before his mighty cross. “With all my sin, and all my hardness of heart,” let the believer say, “I do believe that Jesus died for me.” Let him clasp that cross, let him look into those languid eyes, let him bathe in that fountain filled with blood; this will bring back to him his first love; this will restore the ancient holiness of his faith, and the former tenderness of his soul!

To you who think that you never were converted and probably never were, who have grown very hard, who fear you never could by any possibility melt in repentance, I give this exhortation, O may the Holy Spirit enable you to obey it. Come to Jesus ye vilest of men! Labouring ones, heavy laden ones, come to Jesus! Black, foul, filthy, hard-hearted ones, come to

Jesus! He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. We are not in hell yet, the iron door has not grated on its hinges, the dread bolt has not yet slid into its socket. There is hope for there is life, there is hope for there is a promise, there is hope for there hangs the Savior, — there is hope for me, for you, for both of us, if we go humbly to the mercy seat, and take Christ to be our all in all. God help us to do it for Jesus' name's sake. Amen.

# “THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST.”

NO. 621

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 26TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The precious blood of Christ.” — 1 Peter 1:19.*

IT is frequently my fear lest I should fall into the habit of preaching about the gospel than directly preaching the gospel, and hence I labor to return to the first principle, of our faith, and often take a text upon which it would not be possible to say anything new, but which will compel me to recapitulate in your bearing those things which are vital, essential, and fundamental to the life of our souls. With such a text as this before me, if I do not preach the gospel, I shall do violence both to the sacred word and to my own conscience. Surely I may hope that while endeavoring to unfold my text, and to proclaim the saving word, the Holy Spirit will be present to take of the things of Christ and to show them unto us and make them saving to our souls.

Blood has from the beginning been regarded by God as a most precious thing. He has hedged about this fountain of vitality with the most solemn sanctions. The Lord thus commanded Noah and his descendants, “Flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.” Man had every moving thing that liveth given him for meat, but they were by no means to eat the blood with the flesh. Things strangled were to be considered unfit for food, since God would not have man become too familiar with blood by eating or drinking it in any shape or form. Even the blood of bulls and goats thus had a sacredness put upon it by God’s decrees. As for the blood of man, you remember how God’s threatening ran, “And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of

every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." It is true that the first murderer had not his blood shed by man, but then the crime was new and the penalty had not then been settled and proclaimed, and therefore the case was clearly exceptional, and one by itself; and, moreover, Cain's doom was probably far more terrible than if he had been slain upon the spot: he was permitted to fill up his measure of wickedness, to be a wanderer and a vagabond upon the face of the earth, and then to enter into the dreadful heritage of wrath, which his life of sin had doubtless greatly increased. Under the theocratic dispensation, in which God was the King and governed Israel, murder was always punished in the most exemplary manner, and there was never any toleration or excuse for it. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, life for life, was the stern inexorable law. It is expressly written, "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer which is guilty of death: but he shall surely be put to death." Even in cases where life was taken in chance-medley or misadventure, the matter was not overlooked. The slayer fled at once to the city of refuge, where, after having his case properly tried, he was allowed to reside; but there was no safety for him elsewhere until the death of the high priest. The general law in all cases was, "So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel." Strange is it that that very thing which defileth, should turn out to be that which alone can cleanse. It is clear, then, that blood was ever precious in God's sight, and he would have it so in ours. He first forbids the blood of beasts as food of man, then avenges the blood of man shed in anger; and, furthermore, takes care that even accident shall not pour it out unheeded. Nor is this all, for we hear within us the echo of that law. We feel that God has made blood a sacred thing, for though some can, through use and habit, read the story of war with patience, if not with pleasure; though the sound of the trumpet and the drum, and the tramp of soldiery will stir our heart, and make us for the moment sympathize with the martial spirit; yet, if we could see war as it really is, if we could only walk but half across a battle-field, or see but one wounded man, a cold shiver would shoot through the very marrow of our bones, and we should have experimental proof that blood is indeed a sacred thing. The other night, when I listened to one who professed to have come from battlefields

of the American war, I felt a faintness and clammy sweat steal over me, as he shocked and horrified us with the details of mutilated bodies, and spoke of standing up to the tops of his boots in pools of human gore. The shudder which ran through us all was a sure confirmation of the sanctity with which God has for ever guarded the symbol and nutriment of life. We cannot even contemplate the probability of the shedding of blood without fear and trembling; and comforts which entail high risks in their production or procuring will lose all sweetness to men of humane dispositions. Who does not sympathize with David in his action with regard to the water procured by his three mighties! The three heroes broke through the hosts of the Philistines to bring David water from the well of Bethlehem, and as soon as he received that water, though very thirsty, and much longing for it, yet he felt he could not touch it because these men had run such dreadful risks in breaking thrice through the Philistine hosts to bring it to him, and therefore he took the water and poured it out before the Lord, as if it was not meet that men should run risk of life for any but God who gave life. His words were very touching, "My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy or their lives they brought it." I wonder at the cruelty of the great crowds who delight to see men and women running such fearful risks of life in rope-dancing. How is it that they can feed their morbid curiosity on such dreadful food, and greet the man who is foolish enough to run such hazards with acclamations because of his foolhardiness? How much more Christ-like the regret of David that he should have led any man to risk his life for his comfort! How much more laudable was his belief that nothing short of the highest benevolence to man, or the highest devotion to God, can justify such jeopardy of life!

Further permit me to observe, that the seal of the sanctity of blood is usually set upon the conscience even of the most depraved of men, not merely upon gentle souls and sanctified spirits, but even upon the most hardened; for you will notice that men, bad as they are, shrink from the disgrace of taking blood-money. Even those high priests who could sit down and gloat their eyes with the sufferings of the Savior, would not receive the price of blood into the treasury; and even Judas, that son of perdition, who could contemplate without horror the treachery by which he betrayed his master, yet, when he had the thirty pieces of silver in his palm, found the money too hot to hold; he threw it down in the temple, for he could not bear or abide the sight of "the price of blood." Another proof



that even when virtue has become extinct, and vice reigns, yet God has put the broad arrow or his own sovereignty so manifestly upon the very thought of blood that even these worst of spirits are compelled to shrink from tampering therewith.

Now, if in ordinary cases the shedding of life be thus precious, can you guess how fully God utters his heart's meaning when he says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints?" If the death of a rebel be precious, what must be the death of a child? If he will not contemplate the shedding of the blood of his own enemies and of them that curse him without proclaiming vengeance, what think you concerning his own elect, of whom he says, "Precious shall their blood be in his sight?" Will he not avenge them, though he bear long with them? Shall the cup which the harlot of Rome filled with the blood of the saints, long remain unavenged? Shall not the martyrs from Piedmont and the Alps, and from our Smithfield, and from the hills of covenanting Scotland, yet obtain from God the vengeance due for all that they suffered, and all the blood which they poured forth in the defense of his cause?

I have taken you up, you see, from the beast to man, from man to God's chosen men, the martyrs. I have another step to indicate to you: it is a far longer one — it is to the blood OF JESUS CHRIST. Here, powers of speech would fail to convey to you an idea of the preciousness! Behold here, a person innocent, without taint within, or flaw without; a person meritorious, who magnified the law and made it honorable — a person who served both God and man even unto death. Nay, here you have a divine person — so divine, that in the Acts of the Apostles Paul calls his blood the "blood of God." Place innocence, and merit, and dignity, and position, and Godhead itself, in the scale, and then conceive what must be the inestimable value of the blood which Jesus Christ poured forth. Angels must have seen that matchless blood-shedding with wonder and amazement, and even God himself saw what never before was seen in creation or in providence; he saw himself more gloriously displayed than in the whole universe beside.

Let us come nearer to the text and try to shew forth the preciousness of the blood of Christ. We shall confine ourselves to an enumeration of some of the many properties possessed by this precious blood. I felt as I was studying, that I should have so many divisions this morning that some of you would compare my sermon to the bones in Ezekiel's vision, — they

were very many and they were very dry; but I am in hopes that God's Holy Spirit may so descend upon the bones in my sermon, which would be but dry of themselves, that they being quickened and full of life, you may admire the exceeding great army of God's thoughts of loving-kindness towards his people, in the sacrifice of his own dear Son.

The precious blood of Christ is useful to God's people in a thousand ways: we intend to speak of twelve of them. After all, the real preciousness of a thing in the time of pinch and trial, must depend upon its usefulness. A bag of pearls would be to us, this morning, far more precious than a bag of bread; but you have all heard the story of the man in the desert, who stumbled, when near to die, upon a bag, and opened it, hoping that it might be the wallet of some passer-by, and he found in it nothing but pearls! If they had been crusts of bread, how much more precious would they have been! I say, in the hour of necessity and peril, the use of a thing really constitutes the preciousness of it. This may not be according to political economy, but it is according to common sense.

**1.** The precious blood of Christ has a REDEEMING POWER. It redeems from the law. We were all under the law which says, "This do, and live." We were slaves to it: Christ has paid the ransom price, and the law is no longer our tyrant master. We are entirely free from it. The law had a dreadful curse; it threatened that whosoever should violate one of its precepts, should die: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." By the fear of this curse, the law inflicted a continual dread on those who were under it; they knew they had disobeyed it, and they were all their lifetime subject to bondage, fearful lest death and destruction should come upon them at any moment: but we are not under the law, but under grace, and consequently "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." We are not afraid of the law now; its worst thunders cannot affect us, for they are not hurled at us! Its most tremendous lightnings cannot touch us, for we are sheltered beneath the cross of Christ, where the thunder loses its terror and the lightning its fury. We read the law of God with pleasure now; we look upon it as in the ark covered with the mercy seat, and not thundering in tempests from Sinai's fiery brow.

Happy is that man who knows his full redemption from the law, its curse, its penalty, its present dread. My brethren, the life of a Jew, happy as it was compared with that of a heathen, was perfect drudgery compared to yours

and mine. He was hedged in with a thousand commands and prohibitions, his forms and ceremonies were abundant, and their details minutely arranged. He was always in danger of making himself unclean. If he sat upon a bed or upon a stool, he might be defiled; if he drank out of an earthen pitcher, or even touched the wall of a house, a leprous man might have put his hand there before him, and he would thus become defiled. A thousand sins of ignorance were like so many hidden pits in his way; he must be perpetually in fear lest he should be cut off from the people of God. When he had done his best any one day, he knew he had not finished; no Jew could ever talk of a finished work. The bullock was offered, but he must bring another; the lamb was offered this morning, but another must be offered this evening, another to-morrow, and another the next day. The Passover is celebrated with holy rites; it must be kept in the same manner next year. The high priest has gone within the veil once, but he must go there again; the thing is never finished, it is always beginning. He never comes any nearer to the end. "The law could not make the comer thereunto perfect." But see our position: we are redeemed from this. Our law is fulfilled, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness; our passover is slain, for Jesus died; our righteousness is finished, for we are complete in him; our victim is slain, our priest has gone within the veil, the blood is sprinkled; we are clean, and clean beyond any fear of defilement, "For he hath perfected for ever those that were set apart." Value this precious blood, my beloved, because thus it has redeemed you from the thralldom and bondage which the law imposed upon its votaries.

**2.** The value of the blood lies much in its ATONING EFFICACY. We are told in Leviticus, that "it is the blood which maketh an atonement for the soul." God never forgave sin apart from blood under the law. This stood as a constant text — "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Meal and honey, sweet spices and incense, would not avail without shedding of blood. There was no remission promised to future diligence or deep repentance; without shedding of blood pardon never came. The blood, and the blood alone put away sin, and permitted that man to come to God's courts to worship, because it made him one with God. The blood is the great at-one-ment. There is no hope of pardon for the sin of any man, except through its punishment being fully endured. God must punish sin. It is not an arbitrary arrangement that sin shall be punished, but it is a part of the very constitution of moral government that sin must be punished. Never did God swerve from that, and never will he. "He will by no means

clear the guilty.” Christ, therefore, came and was punished in the place and stead of all his people. Ten thousand times ten thousand are the souls for whom Jesus shed his blood. He, for the sins of all the elect, hath a complete atonement made. For every man of Adam born, who has believed or shall believe on that, or who is taken to glory before being capable of believing Christ has made a complete atonement; and there is none other plan by which sinners can be made at one with God, except by Jesus’ precious blood. I may make sacrifices; I may mortify my body; I may be baptized; I may receive sacraments; I may pray until my knees grow hard with kneeling; I may read devout words until I know them by heart; I may celebrate masses; I may worship in one language or in fifty languages; but I can never be at one with God, except by blood; and that blood, the precious blood of Christ.”

My dear friends, many of you have felt the power of Christ’s redeeming blood; you are not under the law now, but under grace: you have also felt the power of the atoning blood; you know that you are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son; you feel that he is no angry God to you, that he loves you with a love unchangeable; but this is not the case with you all. O that it were! I do pray that you may know this very day the atoning power of the blood of Jesus. Creature, wouldst thou not be at one with thy Creator? Puny man, wouldst thou not have Almighty God to be thy friend? Thou canst not be at one with God except through the at-one-ment. God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sins. Oh, take the propitiation through faith in his blood, and be thou at one with God.

**3.** Thirdly, the precious blood of Jesus Christ has A CLEANSING POWER. John tells us in his first Epistle, first chapter, seventh verse, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” Sin has a directly defiling effect upon the sinner, hence the need of cleansing. Suppose that God the Holy One were perfectly willing to be at one with an unholy sinner, which is supposing a case that cannot be, yet even should the pure eyes of the Most High wink at sin, still as long as we are unclean we never could feel in our own hearts anything like joy, and rest, and peace. Sin is a plague to the man who has it, as well as a hateful thing to the God who abhors it. I must be made clean, I must have mine iniquities washed away, or I never can be happy. The first mercy that is sung of in the one hundred and third Psalm is, “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.” Now we know it is by the precious blood that sin is cleansed. Murder, adultery, theft, whatever the sin may be, there is power in the veins of Christ to take it away at once and

for ever. No matter how many, nor how deeply-seated our offenses may be, the blood cries, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." It is the song of heaven, — "We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This is the experience of earth, for none was ever cleansed except in this fountain, opened for the house of David for sin and for uncleanness.

You have heard this so often that perhaps if an angel told it to you, you would not take much interest in it, except you have known experimentally the horror of uncleanness and the blessedness of being made clean. Beloved, it is a thought which ought to make our hearts leap within us, that through Jesus' blood there is not a spot left upon any believer, not a wrinkle nor any such thing.

*"Though in myself defiled I am,  
And black as Kedar's tent, appear,  
Yet when I put thy garment on,  
Fair as the courts of Solomon."*

You have no spiritual beauty, beloved, apart from Christ; but, having Christ, he himself saith, "Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee." Oh, precious blood, which makes the blackamoor white as snow and takes out the leopard's spots! Oh precious blood, removing the hell-stains of abundant iniquity, and permitting me to stand accepted in the beloved, notwithstanding all the many ways in which I have rebelled against my God!

**4.** A fourth property of the blood of Christ is ITS PRESERVING POWER. You will rightly comprehend this when you remember the dreadful night of Egypt, when the destroying angel was abroad to slay God's enemies. A bitter cry went up from house to house as the firstborn of all Egypt, from Pharaoh on the throne to the firstborn of the woman behind the mill and the slave in the dungeon, fell dead in a moment. The angel sped with noiseless wing through every street of Egypt's many cities; but there were some houses which he could not enter: he sheathed his sword and breathed no malediction there. What was it which preserved the houses? The inhabitants were not better than others, their habitations were not more elegantly built, there was nothing except the bloodstain on the lintel and on the two side posts, and it is written, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." There was nothing whatever which gained the passover for Israel but

just the sprinkling of blood. The father of the house had taken a lamb and killed it, had caught the blood in a bason, and while the lamb was roasted that it might be eaten by every inhabitant of the house, he took a bunch of hyssop, stirred the bason of blood and went outside with his children and began to strike the posts, and to strike the door, and as soon as this was done, they were all safe, all safe: no angel could touch them, the fiends of hell themselves could not venture there. Beloved, see, we are preserved in Christ Jesus. Did not God see the blood before you and I saw it, and was not that the reason why he spared our forfeited lives when like barren fig trees, we brought forth no fruit for him? When we saw the blood, let us remember it was not our seeing it, which really saved us; one sight of it gave us peace, but it was God's seeing it that saved us. "When I see the blood I will pass over you." And to-day, if my eye of faith be dim, and I see the precious blood, so as to rejoice that I am washed and I can scarce see the precious blood in it, yet God can see the blood, and as long as the undimmed eye of Jehovah looks upon the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, he cannot smite one soul that is covered with its scarlet mantle. Oh, how precious is this blood-red shield! My soul, cower thou down under it when the darts of hell are flying: this is the chariot, the covering whereof is of purple; let the storm come, and the deluge rise, let even the fiery hail descend beneath that crimson pavilion my soul must rest secure, for what can touch me, when I am covered with his precious blood? The preserving power of that blood should make us feel how precious it is. Beloved, let me beg you to try and realize these points. You know, I told you before, I cannot say anything new upon the subject, neither can I embody these old thoughts in new words. I should only spoil them, and be making a fool of myself, by trying to make a display of myself and my own powers, instead of the precious blood. Let me ask you to get here, right under the shelter of the cross. Sit down now beneath the shadow of the cross and feel, "I am safe, I am safe, O ye devils of hell; or ye angels of God — I could challenge you all, and say, 'Who shall separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus, or who shall lay anything to my charge, seeing that Christ hath died for me.'" When heaven is on a blaze, when earth begins to shake, when the mountains rock, when God divides the righteous from the wicked, happy will they be who can find a shelter beneath the blood. But where will you be who have never trusted in its cleansing power? You will call to the rocks to hide you, and to the mountains to cover you, but all in vain. God help you now, or even the blood will not help you then.

**5.** Fifthly, the blood of Christ is precious because of its PLEADING PREVALENCE. Paul says in the twelfth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, at the twenty-fourth verse, “It speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Abel’s blood pleaded and prevailed; its cry was “Vengeance” and Cain was punished. Jesus’ blood pleads and prevails; its cry is “Father, forgive them!” and sinners are forgiven through it. When I cannot pray as I would, how sweet to remember that the blood prays! There is no voice in my tongue, but there is always a voice in the blood. If I cannot, when I bow before my God, get farther than to say “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” yet my advocate before the throne is not dumb because I am, and his plea has not lost its power because my faith in it may happen to be diminished. The blood is always alike prevalent with God. The wounds of Jesus are so many mouths to plead with God for sinners — what if I say they are so many chains with which love is lead captive, and sovereign mercy bound to bless every favored child? What if I say that the wounds of Jesus have become doors of grace through which divine love comes forth to the vilest of the vile, and doors through which our wants go up to God and plead with him that he would be pleased to supply them? Next time you cannot pray, next time you are crying and striving and groaning up in that upper room, praise the value of the precious blood which maketh intercession before the eternal throne.

**6.** Sixthly, the blood is precious where perhaps we little expect it to operate. It is precious, because of its MELTING INFLUENCE on the human heart. “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” There is a great complaint among sinners, when they are a little awakened, that they feel their hearts so hard. The blood is a mighty melter. Alchemists of old sought after a universal solvent: the blood of Jesus is that. There is no nature so stubborn that a sight of the love of God in Christ Jesus cannot melt it, if grace shall open the blind eye to see Christ. The stone in the human heart shall melt away, when it is plunged into a bath of blood divine. Cannot you say, dear friends, that Toplady was right in his hymn —

*“Law and terrors do but harden  
All the while they work alone,  
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,  
Soon dissolves a heart of stone.”*

Sinner, if God shall lead thee to believe this morning in Christ to save thee; if then wilt trust thy soul in his hands to have it saved, that hard heart of thine will melt at once. You would think differently of sin, my friends, if you knew that Christ smarted for it. Oh! if you knew that out of those dear languid eyes, there looked the loving heart of Jesus upon you, I know you would say, "I hate the sin that made him mourn, and fastened him to the accursed tree." I do not think that preaching the law generally softens men's hearts. Hitting men with a hard hammer may often drive the particles or a hard heart more closely together, and make the iron yet more hard; but oh, to preach Christ's love — his great love wherewith he loved its even when we were dead in sins, and to tell to sinners that there is life in a look at the crucified One — surely this will prove that Christ was exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Come for repentance, if you cannot come repenting. Come for a broken heart, if you cannot come with a broken heart. Come to be melted, if you are not melted. Come to be wounded, if you are not wounded.

**7.** But then comes in a seventh property of the precious blood. The same blood that melts has A GRACIOUS POWER TO PACIFY. John Bunyan speaks of the law as coming to sweep a chamber like a maid with a broom; and when she began to sweep there was a great dust which almost choked people, and got into their eyes; but then came the gospel with its drops of water, and laid the dust, and then the broom might be used far better. Now it sometimes happens that the law of God makes such a dust in the sinner's soul, that nothing but the precious blood of Jesus Christ can make that dust lie still. The sinner is so disquieted that nothing can ever give him my relief except to know that Jesus died for him. When I felt the burden of my sin, I do confess all the preaching I ever heard never gave me one single atom of comfort. I was told to do this and to do that, and when I had done it all, I had not advanced one inch the farther. I thought, I must feel something, or pray a certain quantity; and when I had done that, the burden was quite as heavy. But the moment I saw that there was nothing whatever for me to do, that Jesus did it long, long ago, that all my sins were put on his back and that he suffered all I ought to have suffered, why then my heart had peace with God, peace by believing peace through the precious blood. Two soldiers were on duty in the citadel of Gibraltar, one of them had obtained peace through the precious blood of Christ, the other was in very great distress of mind. It happened to be their turn to stand, both of them, sentinel the same night; and there are many long passages in the rock,



which passages are adapted to convey sounds a very great distance. The soldier in distress of mind was ready to beat his breast for grief: he felt he had rebelled against God, and could not find how he could be reconciled; when, suddenly, there came through the air what seemed to him to be a mysterious voice from heaven saying these words, "The precious blood of Christ." In a moment he saw it all: it was that which reconciled us to God; and he rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Now did those words come directly from God? No. They did as far as the effect was concerned — they did come from the Holy Spirit. Who was it that had spoken those words? Curiously enough, the other sentinel at the far end of the passage was standing still and meditating, when an officer came by and it was his duty of course to give the word for the night, and with soldier-like promptitude he did give it, but not accurately, for instead of giving the proper word, he was so taken up by his meditations that he said to the officer, "The precious blood of Christ." He corrected himself in a moment, but however, he had said it, and it had passed along the passage and reached the ear for which God meant it, and the man found peace and spent his life, in the fear of God, being in after years the means of completing one of our excellent translations of the Word of God into the Hindoo language. Who can tell, dear friends, how much peace you may give by only telling the story of our Savior. If I only had about a dozen words to speak and knew I must die, I would say, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The doctrine of substitution is the pith and marrow of the gospel, and if you can hold that forth, you will prove the value of the precious blood by its peace-giving power.

**8.** We can only spare a minute now upon ITS SANCTIFYING INFLUENCE. The apostle tells us in the ninth chapter and the fourteenth verse that Christ sanctified the people by his own blood. Certain it is, that the same blood which justifies by taking away sin, does in its after-action act upon the new nature and lead it onward to subdue sin and to follow out the commands of God. There is no motive for holiness so great as that which streams from the veins of Jesus. If you want to know why you should be obedient to God's will, my brethren, go and look upon him who sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, and the love of Christ will constrain you, because you will thus judge, "That if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that we which live might not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us and rose again."

**9.** In the ninth place, another blessed property of the blood of Jesus, is ITS POWER TO GIVE ENTRANCE. We are told that the high priest never went within the veil without blood; and surely we can never get into God's heart, nor into the secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear him, nor into any familiar intercourse with our great Father and Friend, except by the sprinkling of the precious blood of Jesus. "We have access with boldness into this grace wherein we stand," but we never dare go a step towards God, except as we are sprinkled with this precious blood. I am persuaded some of us do not come near to God, because we forget the blood. If you try to have fellowship with God in your graces, your experiences, your believings, you will fail; but if you try to come near to God as you stand in Christ Jesus, you will have courage to come; and on the other hand, God will run to meet you when he sees you in the face of his anointed. Oh, for power to get near to God! but there is no getting near to God, except as we got near to the cross. Praise the blood, then, for its power of giving you nearness to God.

**10.** Tenthly — a hint only. The blood is very precious, in the tenth place, for ITS CONFIRMING POWER. No covenant, we are told, was ever valid, unless victims were slain and blood sprinkled; and it is the blood of Jesus which has ratified the new covenant, and made its promises sure to all the seed. Hence it is called "the blood of the everlasting covenant." The apostle changes the figure, and he says that a testament is not of force, except the testator be dead. The blood is a proof that the testator died, and now the law holds good to every legatee, because Jesus Christ has signed it with his own gore. Beloved, let us rejoice that the promises are yea and amen, for no other reason than this, because Christ Jesus died and rose again. Had there been no bowing of the head upon the tree, no slumbering in the sepulcher, no rising from the tomb, then the promises had been uncertain fickle things, not "immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie," and consequently they could never have afforded strong consolation to those who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus. See then the confirming nature of the blood of Jesus and count it very precious.

**11.** I have almost done; but there remains another, it is the eleventh one, and that is THE INVIGORATING POWER Of the precious blood. If you want to know that you must see it set forth as we often do when we cover the table with the white cloth and put thereon the bread and wine. What mean we by this ordinance? We mean by it, that Christ suffered for us, and that we being already washed in his precious blood and so made clean, do come

to the table to drink wine as an emblem of the way in which we live and feed upon his body and upon his blood. He tells us "Except a man shall eat my flesh and drink my blood, there is no life in him." We do therefore, after a spiritual sort, drink his blood, and he says "My blood is drink indeed." Superior drink! Transcendent drink! Strengthening drink — such drink as angels never taste though they drink before the eternal throne. Oh beloved, whenever your spirit faints, this wine shall comfort you; when your griefs are many, drink and forget your misery, and remember your sufferings no more. When you are very weak and faint, take not a little of this for your soul's sake, but drink a full draught of the wine on the lees, well refined, which was set abroad by the soldier's spike, and flowed from Christ's own heart. "Drink to the full; yea, drink abundantly O beloved," saith Christ to the spouse; and do not thou linger when he invites. You see the blood has power without to cleanse, and then it has power within to strengthen. O precious blood, how many are thy uses! May I prove them all!

**12.** Lastly, and twelfthly — twelve is the number of perfection. We have brought out a perfect number of its uses — the blood has AN OVERCOMING POWER. It is written in the Revelation, "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb." How could they do otherwise? He that fights with the precious blood of Jesus, fights with a weapon that will cut through soul and spirit, joints and marrow, a weapon that makes hell tremble, and makes heaven subservient, and earth obedient to the will of the men who can wield it. The blood of Jesus! sin dies at its presence, death ceases to be death: hell itself would be dried up if that blood could operate there. The blood of Jesus! heaven's gates are opened; bars of iron are pushed back. The blood of Jesus! my doubts and fears flee, my troubles and disasters disappear. The blood of Jesus! shall I not go on conquering and to conquer so long as I can plead that! In heaven this shall be the choice jewel which shall glitter upon the head of Jesus — that he gives to his people "Victory, victory, through the blood of the Lamb."

And now, is this blood to be had? Can it be got at? Yes, it is free, as well as full of virtue, — free to every soul that believeth. Whosoever careth to come and trust in Jesus shall find the virtue of this blood in his case this very morning. Away from your own works and doings. Turn those eyes of yours to the full atonement made, to the utmost ransom paid; and if God enables thee, poor soul, this morning to say, "I take that precious blood to be my only hope," you are saved, and you may sing with the rest of us,

*“Now, freed from sin, I walk at large;  
The Savior’s blood’s my full discharge,  
At his dear feet my soul I’ll lay,  
A sinner saved, and homage pay.”*

God grant it may be so, for his name’s sake. Amen.

# TRAVELLING EXPENSES ON THE TWO GREAT ROADS.

NO. 622

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 2ND, 1865,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“So he paid the fare thereof.” — Jonah 1:3.*

AS a general rule, wherever we go, whatever we do, We must “pay the fare thereof.” Expenditure is connected with every act, work, and operation. The sun does not constantly flood this world, and all its sister spheres, with light and heat, without some kind of consumption within itself; nor doth the earth yield her fruits of harvest except at the cost of the matter of which it is composed. By the force of wind and frost, the very “Mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place.” (Job 14:18.) The rivers do not reach the sea without wearing away their banks, and cutting channels in the earth through which their floods may flow. The rain-drops, the generous gifts of heaven, have first been loaned from the treasury of the great deep; the air itself is constantly in process of consumption, and were it not that a fresh supply is daily being produced, even the atmosphere would become exhausted. All the processes of nature involve a constant expenditure of power. Ponderous as is the engine of creation, and little as it shows the fretting power of age, it is certain that in the whole of its machinery, from its most stupendous wheel down to its smallest valve, it is daily and necessarily experiencing an appointed amount of wear and tear. It is assuredly so with regard to the lesser world of man. The body cannot move a limb or contract a muscle without expense. The lifting of my hand, the pointing of my finger, the motion of my tongue, the stirring of my brain in thought, all cost something, and make a draught upon the inner store of strength: you cannot so much as gaze upon the world around you without some wear of

that marvellous optical instrument by which outward sights are brought to the inward mind. Friction operates on flesh, and bone, and sinew, and a higher friction acts on mind, and intellect, and passion, for even these grow weak with strain and age. “The fare thereof” nature sternly demands before she will loose her cable or spread her sail to the breeze. He quarrels with God’s laws who expects something for nothing, and hopes to be served without offering a just remuneration, and to find friends without showing himself friendly. We must pay our fare, for the universe requires it; we will pay it cheerfully, for we are honest men.

This general rule of expenditure holds good when we enter the world of morals and commune with spiritual things. Man plucked the forbidden fruit, and dearly was that apple paid for in the fall of all our race. The Lord redeemed us in his boundless love, but not without a price: the free mercy of God cannot work its way among men except heaven’s best treasure be spent to purchase men from bondage. Expense occurs everywhere in our salvation: “The price of pardon was the Savior’s blood;” “To buy our souls it cost his own.”

*“Theres ne’er a gift his hand bestows,  
But cost his heart a groan.”*

Nor is it so in the kingdom of heaven only, for even if a man would pursue a foolhardy voyage across the sea of rebellion to the horrible land of perdition, in the ship of sin, he must “pay the fare thereof.” Sinners, for that which is not bread must spend their money, and for that which profiteth not, they must pay their labor. He who would be saved must take care to sit down and count the cost, lest, after having begun to build, he should not be able to finish it; but let him not think that he is alone in his expending, for the transgressor’s bill of costs is no light one. War of any sort is costly; but ungodly men will find that a war with heaven is the dearest of all. God’s house, like the palace of Solomon, needeth a large income to sustain its daily feasting, but it is not like the house of evil which maketh a beggar of every man that cometh within its doors.

**I.** I shall this morning commence my discourse by endeavoring to direct your attention to THE COST OF TRAVELLING ON THE BROAD ROAD TO HELL.

Phocian paid for the poison which killed him: and the sinner pays dearly for the sin which proves his ruin. The worldling often taunts the Christian

because he expends his money on his religion. The Christian may well reply to the sinner, "I wish that your taunt were more true, for I fear that I do not spend one-tenth so much in the service of God as you do in the service of your vices." Very few except the most generous of Christians, could venture to say that they spend as much upon their God as profligates squander upon their lusts.

**1.** Let us begin to reckon up the bill! We are met at once with a heavy item. The man who makes the world his idol, and forgets God, has at once, at the start of his voyage, to pay down and place in a sinking fund, all hope of Gods favor and all expectation of the blessings which it brings. He cannot run contrary to God's will and command, and then expect that God will be his friend and prosper his designs. If I set myself up in rebellion against heaven's great King, I cannot suppose that he will make it his constant care to promote my interests, nor dare I dream that he will aid and abet me in my designs of evil. "With the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward" (Psalm 18:26), is the revelation of Scripture. "If ye walk contrary to me, I will walk contrary to you," is the voice of the God of Sinai. The man throws down the gage of battle against the Lord, and his Creator will let him know that it is "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker." Longsuffering is Jehovah, and doth not smite the rebel with speedy ruin, but still it is written, "God is angry with the wicked every day: if he turn not he will whet his sword, he hath bent his bow and made it ready." The good man sees a gracious providence smiling at his side; he knows that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" and although the wheels of providence are too high for him to understand their revolutions, yet he knows that they are fall of eyes, marking the wisdom and care of his Father in heaven. He sings with rapture-

*"Thy ways, O Lord. with wise design,  
Are framed upon thy throne above;  
And every dark and bending line  
Meets in the center of thy love."*

The Almighty God is the believer's refuge, and beneath his wings he finds perpetual shelter. Not so the sinner. In the court of providence he is an outlaw, and can claim no right of protection. How shall providence care for him who careth not for God? He is under its ban, and he shall ere long learn that "They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed." The ungodly cannot claim the privilege which Eliphaz ascribes

to the righteous — “He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee” — on the contrary, providence may justly remind him of his sins, and say, “Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?” Our gracious God has given no charge to his angels to keep the sinner in all his ways; those ministering spirits have no commission to bear him up, lest he dash his foot against a stone; rather, the forces of nature are restrained by almighty mercy, of else the very stars in their courses, and the waters in the rivers, would fight against the wicked, as they did against Sisera in days of yore. The Christian has the presence of God also to rejoice in. Mungo Park, when lost in the wilderness, observed a tiny piece of moss, and marking how beautifully it was fashioned, he recollected, “God is here! my Father is here!” So doth the Christian. He is never out of his Father’s house, and consequently he is evermore at home. The lines of Thompson are ours, not as poetry merely, but as matter of fact:-

*“Should Fate command me to the farthest verge  
Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,  
Rivers unknown to song; where first the sun  
Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam*

*Flames on the Atlantic isles; ‘tis nought to me;  
Since God is ever present, ever felt,  
In the void waste as in the city full;  
And where He vital breathes, there must be joy.*

*When even at last the solemn hour shall come,  
And wing my mystic flight to future worlds,  
I cheerful will obey; there with new powers  
Will rising wonders sing. I cannot go  
Where UNIVERSAL LOVE not smiles around,*

*Sustaining all yon orbs, and all their sons,  
From seeming evil still educating good.  
And better thence again, and better still,  
In infinite progression.”*

It is not so with the sinner? The presence of God is to him dreadful. If there were some valley of confusion where God’s power is not known, its



congenial desolation would become the sinner's heaven: the place where God's presence shall gleam upon him with irresistible force will be his hell.

Moreover, the sinner gives up every promise of God in choosing the road to perdition. There is not a word in this book of divine love which can breathe comfort into the sinner's ear while he chooses; his own ways. It is a book of threatenings and of curses to the impenitent. It woos as a mother would call her wandering child; it has a gentle voice for every broken and contrite spirit, but it thunders like Sinai's own self against every hardened sinner who will not turn from his wicked way. O unbeliever, you have renounced, by the very fact of your remaining without God and without Christ, all possession in the rich promises of God. You have sunk the immense capital upon the interest of which the Christian lives in time, and in the enjoyment of which he hopes to be blest throughout eternity. Ye who know how to reckon, mark this one item of expenditure to begin with, and guess how heavy is the fare of sin!

**2.** In the next place, they who follow the course of sin make a great expenditure of their time. However, that I dare say they do not think much of, for time to them is a mere drug of no clear value. Many of the ungodly seek after pastimes, kill-times, and all sorts of inventions by which they may get rid of time, which to us appears sadly too little for our daily work. The precious privilege of existence is to them a nuisance; the pictured gallery of life is to them a prison or corridor through which they would hasten as speedily as may be, forgetting its end and whereunto it leads. Ah! brethren, if they were wise, they would comprehend that time is the stuff which life is made of, and that this life is the only season in which we can be made meet for the enjoyments of eternity. If men understood it, they would sooner cast pearls to swine than give their days to sin, and their nights to rioting. If time be the chrysalis of eternity, who but a fool would treat it with contempt! He is the worst of prodigals who wastes that most precious of all treasures, his time; but what hours does fashion demand! what days will the debauched and the profligate give to their sensual indulgence! but what am I saying, it is needless to single out the more bold of transgressors, the rule is universal, the sinner's life is all waste, for it is unconsecrated by faith, unblest by God, and is therefore all lavished for nought on shadows and dreams.

**3.** It must not be forgotten that some ungodly men expend a deal of labor to gratify their evil desires. The way to hell may be down-hill, but it is not

all smooth. There are hill Difficulties even for the ungodly. "The way or transgressors is hard." Hence the Savior says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," for sinners labor, and their sins prove to be a heavy burden. The same Hebrew word, and the same Greek word, stands both for "laboring," and for "sin," for sinning is often hard; as the prophet says, "The people labor in the very fire, and weary themselves for vanity." Though men call sin pleasure, who does not know that it often jades and fags the man worse than the hardest toil! How the proud man toils for honor! How the miser pinches himself for gold! How the thief exhausts his ingenuity to get at another man's wealth! How hard is the harlot's drudgery! How heavy is the yoke of Satan!

**4.** Sinners, again, are frequently put by their sins to a great expense of their actual substance. Their money finds feather's for its wings in the gratification of their desires. Who can be a drunkard without coming to poverty or lessening his estate? Who fills the cup to the brim without ere long clothing himself with rags, and bringing his household to poverty? The prodigal wasted his substance in riotous living; who can do otherwise, if he entertains a host of greedy sins? God only knows how much of the poverty of this land is due to nothing else but drunkenness. No doubt there always will be some poverty which may claim our charity, for the poor shall never cease out of the land; but still, it is to be feared that three-fourths of all the poverty of this great city is to be traced more or less directly to the gin-palace and the beer-shop. Drunkenness is a "reedy sin, and like the horseleech it crieth, "Give, give." England, with all its liberality, does not give anything like so much to the cause of missions, or for the maintenance of religion, as men spend in intoxication. Then look at other sins, how costly they are! Consider those amusements of the world which many defend as being no offense to public morals, but which the spiritual avoid as being unfit occupations for heirs of heaven; even these are far from being inexpensive. I noticed yesterday an advertisement in the newspaper of boxes at the opera, for a certain term, to be let for two hundred guineas. What would people think if a pew in any place of worship were only to be had on terms of so heavy a subscription? Why, that sum would pay the charges all the year round of full many a place of worship; and yet this amount represents probably but a portion of the expense involved in attendance at the theater. There are far greater drains upon the purse than those implied in missionary societies, ministers, chapels, and bible-women. Who has not heard how fast debauchery burns the candle at both ends? Is

it not said of the prodigal, that he devoured his living with harlots? This sin has brought many a man of wealth and fortune down to shiver like a beggar on a dunghill. "Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house...lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labors be in the house of a stranger." He who sins must pay the fare thereof.

**5.** Nor is this all. Those men who go far into sin, and carry out the desires of their hearts, soon find that there is an expense of health, How many a man hath rottenness in his bones, and disease in his heart's core, brought on by gluttony, drunkenness, and vice! Well may men pray that they may be delivered from the sins of their youth and their former transgressions; for they are in a sad plight who mourn at the last, when their flesh and their body are consumed. It is not God who has thickly sown this world with disease and sorrow-man's iniquity has done it. Men cast darnel and cockle into the furrows of life, and when they spring up, they complain of the appointments of God, whereas, they are the result of their own sins; and there is no injustice in the rule, that, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" "His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust." The fare, the full fare of sin's voyage, must be paid.

**6.** Another expense, and that one which ought not to be forgotten, is the loss of peace of mind. A man cannot indulge in sin, and yet go to his bed with a quiet conscience; at least, if he can do so, this callousness is of itself a still greater evil. For the most part, men start back at the ghosts of their own crimes. "Terrors make the wicked afraid on every side, and drive them to their feet." Even the respectable sinner whose life is outwardly moral, but whose heart is far from God, cannot avoid some qualms and disturbance of mind. If I am not one with God, if I am not washed in Jesus' blood, if I am not sanctified by God's Holy Spirit, there is an aching void within me which the world can never fill; there is an inward monitor which tells me, "There is something that you want, a something that the world cannot give you, which you cannot earn for yourself. How is it that you are living in the neglect of it?" "A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him....He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand." Until I was saved by grace, I can truly say I had no lasting peace, but now my peace is like a river. How a trumpet will often blanch the

sinner's cheek! The cholera comes, and how the man trembles because death is at work next door! How fearful he is when he stands at the grave's brink and looks down upon the coffin of some companion with whom he has spent many a roisterous hour! Ah! you cannot have peace, you cannot have peace till you have Christ, you cannot be truly happy till you have given your souls to Jesus. The apple may look fair, but it is rotten within. Ye may talk of joy, but ye know it not if ye know not Jesus. Surely to lose this priceless pearl is an item in the bill of no mean magnitude.

*“Peace has sweets  
That Hybla never knew; it sleeps on down  
Cull'd gently from beneath the cherub's wing.*

Who would throw this away for vexing, mocking, deceiving, lying vanities?

**7.** The worst expense, however, we have only hinted at. The man who goes to hell must pay the fare thereof in another way — he loses his soul. What that loss may be, no mortal tongue can tell. If one could come again from the pit, as once the rich man proposed, perhaps he might tell us in dolorous tones what it is to be cast out from God into the place where there is not a drop of water to cool the fire-tormented tongue; but it is not for us even to conceive what the place of torment may be. Enough to hear and profit by the question of the Savior: “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” What is Caesar the better for his dominions? What is Croesus the better for his wealth? What is the philosopher the better for his wisdom, now that he is cast away from the favor of God for ever? In fact, the greater the wretched beings were on earth, the more terrible will their doom be in eternity, when, looking from their beds of flame, the lesser sinners shall cry, “Art thou become like one of us? Is the lofty one brought low? Is the proud one humbled? Is the boaster made to feel in the torment of this fire that he is no greater than the rest of us?” I say, the more honor, and dignity, and glory, the man obtained on earth, the more terrible his shame and disgrace when, his soul being lost, he is cast into the pit for ever. Let us then, if we have been deluded by the pleasures of sin, or have been tempted in any way to forget God because we have thought that the way of the flesh was easy, let us think awhile that we shall have to pay the fare thereof, and that the fare is far too expensive to be paid by men of understanding. We dare not risk soul and body, life and death, heaven and hell, judgment and eternity, merely for the sake of those

paltry, passing, delusive joys, which are all that the world can pretend to offer.

## II. Let us change our strain, and say a little upon THE EXPENSE OF AVOIDING DUTY.

Jonah's duty was to go to Nineveh and preach the Word: he preferred not to go; he therefore shirked the work, went down to Joppa and paid his fare to go to Tarshish. I hope we are not in the habit of doing the same, but yet there are occasions when even God's servants shrink from duty, and seem willing to forget that where God calls they are bound to go. Possibly this remark may apply to some minister who may come under the Word. He is called to bear his protest against a certain sin, and he thinks to himself, "If I so speak, some of those who hear me will never come again, I may lose rich subscribers; I will not say a word on that point." Or, he has it laid upon him, to cry against the monstrous evils in the State Church; but he puts his finger to his lips, and remains silent, inwardly calculating, "I had better hold my peace on that subject, for I may risk my popularity." Such a minister should reflect that it is a very expensive thing to try to fly to Tarshish when you ought to go to Nineveh, for a man cannot avoid duty without expense. I have known good people who will say, "I know so-and-so is what I ought to do, but still you see the path is very difficult, and I do not feel called upon to make so great a sacrifice." Well, friend, if you do not make the sacrifice when God demands it of you, he has other ways of taking away your treasured goods. In the long run you will find it far more expensive to shun the work and will of God than at once to give yourself to it. You will be a loser by your prudence; you shall find that the scriptural rule holds good, "He that would lose his life shall save it, but he that would save his life shall lose it." If you are willing to be a loser for Christ you shall be a gainer, but if you insist upon being held harmless, and try at all hazards to make provision for the flesh, then you shall find that ere long you will have to pay the fare thereof to your own grievous hurt and injury. What did Jonah lose? Jonah had to pay as part of his fare the presence and comfortable enjoyment of God's love. He went down into the bottom of the vessel and hid himself from sight. I think I see him, that Jonah, who a few days after walked with all the boldness of a lion through the streets of Nineveh, crying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" that Jonah who bearded Nineveh's haughty monarch, and was not afraid to tell him that in forty days his city would be overthrown; that Jonah goes sneaking down among the goods at the bottom of the hold, for fear

anybody should see him, and there hides his coward, craven head. Poor Jonah, thou hast lost the hallowed fellowship of thy God, thou hast lost his presence, and consequently thy courage has all oozed out of thee; this is a dear price which thou hast paid for shunning Nineveh. When you and I serve our Lord Jesus as believers should do, we can remember that our God is with us, and though we have the whole world against us, if we have God with us what does it matter? But oh! the minute we start back, and begin to seek our own inventions and appeal to our own wisdom, we are all at sea without a pilot, and our great Helper withdraws from us. Then may we bitterly lament and groan out, "O my God, where hast thou gone? How could I have been so foolish as to shun thy service, and in this way to lose all the bright shininings of thy face? This is a price too high. Let me return to my allegiance and to thy presence."

In the next place, Jonah lost all peace of mind. When he was in Nineveh, crying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," he was not afraid of the edge of the sword, nor of the tyrant's rage: he felt that he was doing God's work, and he knew that when on God's errands he was perfectly safe. His heart beat gently, like that of a man in a happy, tranquil frame of mind, wearing the herb called heart's ease in his bosom; but now, down there, in the hold of the vessel, his heart is palpitating, he does not know what may happen, and until sleep happily comes in to ease the distress of his mind, he is like a poor hunted staff, panting with alarm.

These were two great things to lose—God's presence, and his own peace of mind—but these were not all his damage and injury; he was now brought into great peril — he must be thrown into the sea. In all likelihood he will meet with a watery grave. Had he gone to Nineveh, that would not have occurred, he would have been under the care of God's special providence there, but now the winds and waves threaten him. With what a splash he falls into the deep! As we see him engulfed, let us with holy caution shun the dangerous way of disobedience. Other men may escape the chastisements of God in this world, but not the Lord's own children. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities."

Now, too, he is brought into great affliction of soul. He tells us that he "cried by reason of affliction." He compares his state to the "belly of hell," he was brought into such depths of distress; a miracle had interposed to save his life, but not to cheer his spirit. Like the Savior, of whom he was a

type, he was exceedingly sorrowful and very heavy, almost unto death. Sin soon destroys a believer's comfort. It is the deadly upas tree from whose leaves distil deadly drops which destroy the life of joy and peace.

Jonah, too, had lost everything upon which he might have drawn for comfort in any other case. He could not turn to the promise of God that he would keep him, for he was not in God's ways; he could not say, "Lord, I am thy servant," for then conscience would have said, "Yes, and a pretty servant, too!" he could not say, "Lord, I am on thine errand!" for conscience would have said, "No, you are on your own!" He could not say, "Lord, I meet with these difficulties in the discharge of my duty, therefore help me through them" — no, for there would have been a reply, "You are not here in the discharge of duty; you flew in the teeth of the Most High; you sought to escape from a little difficulty; you tried to get away from the presence of God altogether, and you have prepared all this for yourself. If the draught be bitter, you mixed it; if the fruit be sharp, you planted the tree; if this harvest be terrible, you sowed the seed; you are reaping your own deeds, you are being filled with your own ways." Poor Jonah! poor Jonah! to be in such a state as this.

Then here is another point, he had to go to Nineveh after all: and so will you. You may kick, but when God means you to do his work, you will be made to do it. The ox-goad has been thrust into you already because you hate the yoke; you do not like it, and you kick against it, and the only result is, that it is driven further into you. Saul, Saul, it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks, for with all your kicking and rebelling, you will have to go where you were originally ordered to go; you might as well go at first — you will go with better grace; you will go with your Master's comfortable presence; but you will have to go one way or another. Many men have found this true. They have struggled against duty, and perhaps, year after year they have drawn back from it, finding miserable excuses for their consciences; but they never prospered in business, they could not get on in the world, they had trouble on trouble, and at last it came to this, they had to go back to the very place where they were ten or twenty years ago, and there they discharged the duty which they had been so long seeking to avoid, which had proved a burdensome stone unto them until they were rid of it by yielding to its demands. Now, my dear brother, do not play the Jonah, for you will have to pay the fare of it. If you know your duty, do it. I may be speaking very pointedly to some of you. "I should have to sever the bonds of many a fond connection." Do it for Christ's

sake. "I should have to leave the camp and go outside of it, take up a very heavy cross, and bear Christ's reproach." You may as well do it now as by-and-by, for you will have to do it. "But," says one, "this business of mine — I have nothing left to live upon; I feel it is a bad business, but I do not like to give it up just yet." You will have to do so sooner or later, you may as well do it now, before, like Jonah, you have had to pay for your wit, remember that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that keep his commandments." May God the Holy Ghost give you the wisdom which cometh from above, which will lead you to sit as a child at the feet of Jesus, and learn his ways. "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee;" "but hearken diligently unto his commandments, and then shall thy peace be like a river, and thy righteousness like the waves of the sea."

### III. A few words upon another point: there is AN EXPENSE CONNECTED WITH GOING TO HEAVEN.

It is estimated at a very high rate by some, who say that the road is good enough, but the tolls are too high. Others pretend to believe that religion is only a scheme for putting money into ministers' pockets, whereas I can truly say for one, that what I receive for my ministry is not a tenth of what I could readily earn in an engagement infinitely less laborious and harassing than my present position; although, be it added, I would not leave my ministry for ten thousand worlds. Let us think over this matter of expense, and begin with an old story. "An aged couple, in the vicinity of London, who, in the early part of life, were poor, but who, by the blessing of God upon their industry, enjoyed a comfortable independency in their old age, were called upon by a Christian minister, who solicited their contributions to a charity. The old lady was disposed to make out some excuse, and to answer in the negative, both for her husband and herself; and therefore replied, 'Why, sir, we have lost a deal by religion since we began; my husband knows that very well;' and being wishful to obtain her husband's consent to the assertion, she said, 'Have we not, Thomas?' Thomas, after a long and solemn pause, replied, 'Yes, Mary, we have lost a deal by our religion! I have lost a deal by my religion. Before I got religion, Mary, I had got a water-pail, in which I carried water, and that you know I lost many years ago. And then I had an old slouched hat, a patched old coat, and mended shoes and stockings; but I have lost them also long ago. And, Mary, you know that, poor as I was, I had a habit of getting drunk, and



quarrelling with you; and that you know I have lost. And then I had a burdened conscience, and a wicked heart; and then I had ten thousand guilty feelings and fears; but all are lost, completely lost, and, like a millstone, cast into the deepest sea. And, Mary, you have been a loser too, though not so great a loser as myself. Before we got religion, Mary, you had a washing-tray, in which you washed for hire; and God Almighty blessed your industry; but since we got religion, you have lost your washing-tray. And you had a gown and bonnet much the worse for wear, though they were all you had to wear; but you have lost them long ago. And you had many an aching heart concerning me, at times; but those you happily have lost. And I could even wish that you had lost as much as I have lost, and even more; for what we lose by our religion, Mary, will be our eternal gain.' We need not add, the preacher did not go away without substantial proof that Thomas deemed his losses for religion his most weighty obligations to the goodness of Almighty God as the richest boon of grace on earth, and the most authentic pledge of glory in the world to come." If some of us were to look back upon what religion has cost us, we might cast up the amount with very much the same result. Where were you wont to spend your Sundays once, some of you? Where would some few of yon have been on other occasions? — at the race-course; at the theater; ay, and in the brothel. But now you are washed, and cleansed, and sanctified, and rejoicing in Christ Jesus. This is what your religion has cost you: the giving up of nothing that made you truly happy, but only renouncing that which pretended to make you happy, but which was ruining your soul for ever. The first expense of religion is that it takes away from men spurious joys and gives them real ones; takes away from them shadows and gives them substance.

Then, again, the expense of your religion has been this: some of you have given a good deal of your time to the cause of Christ; others of you have devoted a considerable portion of your money to it, but after all that you or any of us have ever given, I am sure we can say, religion has cost us nothing which we did not give cheerfully — and it has asked of us nothing which it was not our happiness to render; we have felt a greater joy in giving than in withholding — a greater bliss in serving God than in being idle. Moreover our liberality has always been repaid to us with interest, for our God will be in no man's debt. Here is a specimen of what has been our experience from the pen of a tradesman.

Some years ago I heard a sermon from the words, 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse.' (Malachi 3:10.) I cannot describe how my mind was impressed with the manner in which Jehovah here condescended to challenge his people when he says, 'And prove me now herewith,' etc. Suffice it to say that the subject made such an impression, that I found it my duty to do more for the cause of God than I ever had done. I did so; and on closing that year's accounts, I found that I had gained more than in any two years preceding it. Some time afterwards I thought the Redeemer's cause had an additional claim, as the place in which we worshipped him wanted some repairs. The sum I then gave was L20; and in a very little time afterwards I received L40 which I had long given up as lost." Our Master's service is our liberty; we count it our joy to run in the way of his commandments; and if the worldling pities us, and says, "Poor man, how he must deny himself!" we reply, "In one sense it is true, but in another, our best self is fed, and satisfied, and feasted, when we deny self; the duties we perform are not performed as duties, but as privileges; we do not run into them at all because we feel forced to do so, but because we love them. We confess that religion has cost us our spirit, our soul, our body; and our only regret is, we have not more that we can give to the cause of Christ. We think we can stand at the foot of the Savior's cross, and say-

*"Now for the love I bear his name,  
What was my gain I count my loss,  
My former pride I call my shame,  
And nail my glory to his cross.*

*Yes, and I must and will esteem  
All things but loss for Jesus' sake  
O may my soul be found in him,  
And of his righteousness partake!"*

Religion, then, takes away from us nothing but what we are glad to lose; and it asks nothing of us but what we are too glad to give; and it returns to us in ten thousand ways all that it takes from us. It gives us blessings of the upper and of the nether springs; it comforts us in life, it cheers us in death; it makes us so happy, that we can say with Watts-

*"I would not change my bless'd estate  
For all the world calls good or great;  
And while my faith can keep her hold,  
I envy not the sinner's gold."*

**IV.** In the last place, THE TRUE FARE OF GODLINESS IS ALREADY PAID; NOT BY US, BUT BY OUR LORD JESUS.

Jonah paid his fare from Joppa to Tarshish, but I never find that he paid any fare back. The conveyance which brought him to land was far cheaper than the ship of Tarshish, though not quite so comfortable. He came back to land with no expense to himself whatever. So we must pay much and do much in order to be cast away; but the way of eternal life and salvation is perfectly free. When Jonah was thrown out into the midst of the sea, the whale did not swallow him because he was a man of money, or because he was a man of merit; he was just a needy, destitute sinner, subject to the wrath of God, as expressed in that tempest, and in that storm, and in that boiling sea; and there came the friendly fish, which carried him into a living grave for three days, that his life might be preserved. And this is very much like our salvation, salvation by death and burial with Jesus. We flee away; we trust by our self-righteousness to escape from the tempest of God's wrath, but we cannot. At last we feel that we are cast right out into the sea to perish, and God's anger, as we think, is hot against us; there is no good thing in us, nothing upon which we can rely, we see no hope of escape. Just then the death of Christ, which was our greatest crime, which seems as though it would destroy us, takes us into its friendly shelter, and in it we go to the bottoms of the mountains; in it we descend till all the waves and billows of God's wrath have rolled over us; and in it we are securely landed, to praise the name and love of God. When our extremity comes, and there is none to help, then God prepares the way of deliverance for us, his people.

Hear me for one moment, my brethren, this morning. We have sinned. God help us to feel the sin! Grievously have we offended against God by flying in his face, and going whither he would not have us go. Can we return? We have paid our fare to go to the place of destruction, but we have no means to pay our fare to heaven. Penniless, stripped of all hope in ourselves, is there any way by which we can return — by which we can find eternal life? There is! there is! — if we give ourselves up wholly to God, confessing our sin, and if our soul resteth alone upon the finished work of the great salvation provided in Christ Jesus. We need not fear because we have nothing; our God, who has everything, asks nothing from us. He does not save us because we are righteous, but because he is gracious. He will not deliver us because there is something good in us; but because there is everything good in himself. Let me say to those of you who are sleeping

this morning, careless of your fate, if ye sleep much longer, ye may wake up where your waking will be terrible. What mean ye, O ye sleepers! Rise! bethink ye I bethink ye of your future doom, of your present danger. O spirit of God, arouse them. But if, awakened, ye cry, “What must I do to be saved?”-the answer comes, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Though you can see no means of escape, yet there is a means provided by God, and when you are cast out from the ship, have left all other confidence, and think that God’s sea of wrath will cover you up, then Christ, who has been prepared of old as our great Deliverer, shall take you and bear you safely to the land of eternal glory. I would God that ye were made to forsake the way of the destroyer, and led in the way of peace, that he might have all the praise for ever.

May he bless these poor, feeble, but well-intended remarks, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

# SATAN CONSIDERING THE SAINTS.

NO. 623

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 9TH, 1865

BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job.”  
-Job 1:8.*

HOW very uncertain are all terrestrial things! How foolish would that believer be who should lay up his treasure anywhere, except in heaven! Job's prosperity promised as much stability as anything can do beneath the moon. The man had round about him a large household of, doubtless devoted and attached servants. He had accumulated wealth of a kind which does not suddenly depreciate in value. He had oxen, and asses, and cattle. He had not to go to markets, and fairs, and trade with his goods to procure food and clothing, for he carried on the processes of agriculture on a very large scale round about his own homestead, and probably grew within his own territory everything that his establishment required. His children were numerous enough to promise a long line of descendants. His prosperity wanted nothing for its consolidation. It had come to its flood-tide: where was the cause which could make it ebb?

Up there, beyond the clouds, where no human eye could see, there was a scene enacted which augured no good to Job's prosperity. The spirit of evil stood face to face with the infinite Spirit of all good. An extraordinary conversation took place between these two beings. When called to account for his doings, the evil one boasted that he had gone to and fro throughout the earth, insinuating that he had met with no hindrance to his will, and found no one to oppose his freely moving and acting at his own pleasure. He had marched everywhere like a king in his own dominions, unhindered

and unchallenged. When the great God reminded him that there was at least one place among men where he had no foothold, and where his power was unrecognized, namely, in the heart of Job; that there was one man who stood like an impregnable castle, garrisoned by integrity, and held with perfect loyalty as the possession of the King of Heaven; the evil one defied Jehovah to try the faithfulness of Job, told him that the patriarch's integrity was due to his prosperity, that he served God and eschewed evil from sinister motives, because he found his conduct profitable to himself. The God of heaven took up the challenge of the evil one, and gave him permission to take away all the mercies which he affirmed to be the props of Job's integrity, and to pull down all the outworks and buttresses and see whether the tower would not stand in its own inherent strength without them. In consequence of this, all Job's wealth went in one black day, and not even a child was left to whisper comfort. A second interview between the Lord and his fallen angel took place. Job was again the subject of conversation; and the Great One defied by Satan, permitted him even to touch him in his bone and in his flesh, till the prince became worse than a pauper, and he who was rich and happy was poor and wretched, filled with disease from head to foot, and fain to scrape himself with a miserable potsherd, to gain a poor relief from his pain.

Let us see in this the mutability of all terrestrial things. "He hath founded it upon the floods," is David's description of this world; and, if it be founded on the floods, can you wonder that it changes oft? Put not your trust in anything beneath the stars: remember that "Change" is written on the forefront of nature. Say not therefore, "My mountain standeth firm: it shall never be moved;" the glance of Jehovah's eye can shake thy mountain into dust, the touch of his foot can make it like Sinai, to melt like wax and to be altogether on a smoke. "Set your affection on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," and let your heart and your treasure be "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal." The words of Bernard may here instruct us: "That is the true and chief joy which is not conceived from the creature, but received from the Creator, which (being once possessed thereof) none can take from thee: compared with which all other pleasure is torment, all joy is grief, sweet things are bitter, all glory is baseness, and all delectable things are despicable."

This is not, however, our subject this morning. Accept thus much as merely an introduction to our main discourse. The Lord said to Satan, "Hast thou

considered my servant Job?" Let us deliberate, first, in what sense the evil spirit may be said to consider the people of God; secondly, let us notice what it is that he considers about them; and then, thirdly, let us comfort ourselves by the reflection that one who is far above Satan considers us in a higher sense.

**I. First, then, IN WHAT SENSE MAY SATAN BE SAID TO CONSIDER THE PEOPLE OF God?**

Certainly not in the usual Biblical meaning of the term "consider." "O Lord consider my trouble." "Consider my meditation." "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Such consideration implies good-will and a careful inspection of the object of benevolence with regard to a wise distribution of favor. In that sense Satan never considers any. if he has any benevolence, it must be towards himself; but all his considerations of other creatures are of the most malevolent kind. No meteoric flash of good flits across the black midnight of his soul. Nor does he consider us as we are told to consider the works of God, that is, in order to derive instruction as to God's wisdom and love and kindness. He does not honor God by what he sees in his works, or in his people. It is not with him, "Go to the ant; consider her ways and be wise;" but he goes to the Christian and considers his ways and becomes more foolishly God's enemy than he was before. The consideration which Satan pays to God's saints is upon this wise. He regards them with wonder, when he considers the difference between them and himself. A traitor, when he knows the thorough villainy and the blackness of his own heart, cannot help being astounded, when he is forced to believe another man to be faithful. The first resort of a treacherous heart is to believe that all men would be just as treacherous, and are really so at bottom. The traitor thinks that all men are traitors like himself, or would he, if it paid them better than fidelity. When Satan looks at the Christian, and finds him faithful to God and to his truth, he considers him as we should consider a phenomenon-perhaps despising him for his folly, but yet marvelling at him, and wondering how he can act thus. "I," he seems to say, "a prince, a peer of God's parliament, would not submit my will to Jehovah: I thought it better to reign in hell than serve in heaven: I kept not my first estate, but fell from my throne: how is it that these stand? What grace is it which keeps these? I was a vessel of gold, and yet I was broken; these are earthen vessels, but I cannot break them! I could not stand in my glory-what can be the matchless grace which upholds them in their poverty, in their obscurity, in their persecution, still faithful to the God who

doth not bless and exalt them as he did me!” It may be that he also wonders at their happiness. He feels within himself a seething sea of misery. There is an unfathomable gulf of anguish within his soul, and when he looks at believers, he sees them quiet in their souls, full of peace and happiness, and often without any outward means by which they should be comforted, yet rejoicing and full of glory. He goes up and down through the world and possesses great power, and there he has many myrmidons to serve him, yet he hath not the happiness of spirit possessed by yonder humble cottager, obscure, unknown, having no servants to wait upon her, but stretched upon the bed of weakness. He admires and hates the peace which reigns in the believer’s soul.

His consideration may go farther than this. Do you not think that he considers them to detect, if possible, any flaw and fault in them, by way of solace to himself? “They are not pure,” saith he — “these blood-bought ones—these elect from before the foundations of the world, — they still sin! These adopted children of God, for whom the glorious Son bowed his head and gave up the ghost! —even they offend!” How must he chuckle, with such delight as he is capable of, over the secret sins of God’s people, and if he can see anything in them inconsistent with their profession, anything which appears to be deceitful, and therein like himself, he rejoices. Each sin born in the believer’s heart, cries to him, “My father! my father!” and he feels something like the joy of fatherhood as he sees his foul offspring. He looks at the “old man” in the Christian, and admires the tenacity with which it maintains its hold, the force and vehemence with which it struggles for the mastery, the craft and cunning with which every now and then, at set intervals, at convenient opportunities, it putteth forth all its force. He considers our sinful flesh, and makes it one of the books in which he diligently reads. One of the fairest prospects, I doubt not, which the devil’s eye ever rests upon is the inconsistency and the impurity which he can discover in the true child of God. In this respect he had very little to consider in God’s true servant, Job.

Nor is this all, but rather just the starting point of his consideration. We doubt not that he views the Lord’s people, and especially the more eminent and excellent among them, as the great barriers to the progress of his kingdom and just as the engineer, endeavoring to make a railway, keeps his eye very much fixed upon the hills and rivers, and especially upon the great mountain through which it will take years laboriously to bore a tunnel so Satan, in looking upon his various plans to carry on his dominion



in the world, considers most such men as Job. Satan must have thought much of Martin Luther. "I could ride the world over," says he "if it were not for that monk. He stands in my way. That strong-headed man hates arid mauls my firstborn son, the pope. If I could get rid of him I would not mind though fifty thousand smaller saints stood in my way." He is sure to consider God's servant, if there he "none like him," if he stand out distinct and separate from his fellows. Those of us who are called to the work of the ministry must expect from our position to be the special objects of his consideration. When the glass is at the eye of that dreadful warrior, he is sure to look out for those who by their regimentals are discovered to be the officers, and he bids his sharpshooters be very careful to aim at these, "For," saith he, "if the standard-bearer fall, then shall the victory be more readily gained to our side, and our opponents shall be readily put to rout." If you are more generous than other saints, if you live nearer to God than others, as the birds peck most at the ripest fruit, so may you expect Satan to be most busy against you. Who cares to contend for a province covered with stones and barren rocks, and ice-bound by frozen seas? But in all times there is sure to be a contention after the fat valleys where the wheat-sheaves are plenteous and where the husband-man's toil is well requited, and thus, for you who honor God most, Satan will struggle very sternly. He wants to pluck God's jewels from his crown, if he can, and take the Redeemer's precious stones even from the breastplate itself. He considers, then, God's people; viewing them as hindrances to his reign, he contrives methods by which he may remove them out of his way, or turn them to his own account. Darkness would cover the earth if he could blow out the lights; there would be no fruit to shake like Lebanon, if he could destroy that handful of corn upon the top of the mountains; hence his perpetual consideration is to make the faithful fail from among men.

It needs not much wisdom to discern that the great object of Satan in considering God's people is to do them injury. I scarcely think he hopes to destroy the really chosen and blood-bought heirs of life. My notion is that he is too good a divine for that. He has been foiled so often when he has attacked God's people, that he can hardly think he shall be able to destroy the elect, for you remember the soothsayers who are very nearly related to him, spoke to Haman on this wise; "If Mordicai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." He knows right well that there is a seed royal in the land against whom he fights in vain; and it strikes me if he could be

absolutely certain that any die soul was chosen of God, he would scarcely waste his time in attempting to destroy it, although he might seek to worry and to dishonor it. It is however most likely that Satan no more knows who God's elect are than we do, for he can only judge as we do by outward actions, though he can form a more accurate judgment than we can through longer experience, and being able to see persons in private where we cannot intrude; yet into God's book of secret decrees his black eye can never peer. By their fruits he knows them, and we know them in the same manner. Since, however, we are often mistaken in our judgment, he too may he 50; and it seems to me that he therefore makes it his policy to endeavor to destroy them all-not knowing in which case he may succeed. He goeth about seeking whom he may devour, and, as he knows not whom he may be permitted to swallow up, he attacks all the people of God with vehemence. Some one may say, "How can one devil do this?" He does not do it by himself alone. I do not know that many of us have ever been tempted directly by Satan: we may not be notable enough among men to be worth his trouble; but he has a whole host of inferior spirits under his supremacy and control, and as the centurion said of himself, so he might have said of Satan — "he saith to this spirit, 'Do this,' and he doeth it, and to his servant, 'Go,' and he goeth." Thins all the servants of God will more or less come under the direct or indirect assualts of the great enemy of souls, and that with a view of destroying them; for he would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. Where he cannot destroy, there is no doubt that Satan's object is to worry. He does not like to see God's people happy. I believe the devil greatly delights in some ministers, whose tendency in their preaching is to multiply and foster doubts and fears, and grief, amid despondency, as the evidences of God's people. "Ah," saith the devil, "preach on; you are doing my work well, for I like to see God's people mournful. If I can make them hang their harps on the willows, and go about with miserable faces, I reckon I have done my work very completely." My dear friends, let us watch against those specious temptations which pretend to make us humble, but which really aim at making us unbelieving. Our God takes no delight in our suspicions and mistrusts. See how he proves his love in the gift of his dear Son Jesus. Banish then all your ill surmisings, and rejoice in unmoved confidence. God delights to be worshipped with joy. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that

are upright in heart. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice." Satan does not like this. Martin Luther used to say, "Let us sing psalms and spite the devil," and I have no doubt Martin Luther was pretty nearly right; for that lover of discord hates harmonious, joyous praise. Beloved brother, the arch-enemy wants to make you wretched here, if he cannot have you hereafter; and in this, no doubt, he is aiming a blow at the honor of God. He is well aware that mournful Christians often dishonor the faithfulness of God by mistrusting it, and he thinks if he can worry us until we no more believe in the constancy and goodness of the Lord, he shall have robbed God of his praise. "He that offereth praise, glorifieth me," says God; and so Satan lays the axe at the root of our praise, that God may cease to be glorified.

Moreover, if Satan cannot destroy a Christian, how often has he spoilt his usefulness? Many a believer has fallen, not to break his neck-that is impossible,-but he has broken some important bone, and he has gone limping to his grave! We can recall with grief some men once eminent in the ranks of the Church, who did run well, but on a sudden, through stress of temptation, they fell into sin, and their names were never mentioned in the Church again, except with bated breath. Everybody thought and hoped they were saved so as by fire, but certainly their former usefulness never could return. It is very easy to go back in the heavenly pilgrimage, but it is very hard to retrieve your steps. You may soon turn aside and put out your candle, but you cannot light it quite so speedily. Friend, beloved in the Lord, watch against the attacks of Satan and stand fast, because you, as a pillar in the house of God are very dear to us, and we cannot spare you. As a father, or as a matron in our midst, we do you honor, and oh!-we would not be made to mourn and lament-we do not wish to be grieved by hearing the shouts of our adversaries while they cry "Aha! Alma! so would we have it," for alas! there have been many things done in our Zion which we would not have told in Gath, nor published in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised should rejoice, and the sons of the Philistines should triumph. Oh may God grant us grace, as a Church, to stand against the wiles of Satan and his attacks, that having done his worst he may gain no advantage over us, and after having considered, and considered again, and counted well our towers and bulwarks, he may be compelled to retire because his battering rams cannot jar so much as a stone from our ramparts, and his slings cannot slay one single soldier on the walls.

Before I leave this point, I should like to say, that perhaps it may be suggested, "How is it that God permits this constant and malevolent consideration of his people by the evil one?" One answer, doubtless, is, that God knows what is for his own glory, and that he giveth no account of his matters; that having permitted free agency, and having allowed, for some mysterious reason, the existence of evil, it does not seem agreeable with his having done so to destroy Satan; but he gives him power that it may be a fair hand-to-hand fight between sin and holiness, between grace and craftiness. Besides, he it remembered, that incidentally the temptations of Satan are of service to the people of God; Fenelon says they are the file which rubs off much of the rust of self-confidence, and I may add, they are the horrible sound in the sentinel's ear, which is sure to keep him awake. An experimental divine remarks, that there is no temptation in the world which is so bad as not being tempted at all; for to be tempted will tend to keep us awake: whereas, being without temptation, flesh and blood are weak-and though the spirit may be willing, yet we may be found falling into slumber. Children do not run away from their father's side when big dogs hark at them. The howlings of the devil may tend to drive us nearer to Christ, may teach us our own weakness, may keep us upon our own watch-tower, and he made the means of preservation from other ills. Let us "be sober, be vigilant, because our adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour;" and let us who are in a prominent position be permitted affectionately to press upon you one earnest request, namely, "Brethren, pray for us," that, exposed as we are peculiarly to the consideration of Satan, we may be guarded by divine power. Let us be made rich by your faithful prayers that we may be kept even to the end.

## II. Secondly, WHAT IS IT THAT SATAN CONSIDERS WITH A VIEW TO THE INJURY OF GOD'S PEOPLE?

It cannot be said of him as of God, that he knoweth us altogether; but since he has been now nearly six thousand years dealing with poor fallen humanity, he must have acquired a very vast experience in that time, and having been all over the earth, and having tempted the highest and the lowest, he must know exceedingly well what the springs of human action are, and how to play upon them. Satan watches and considers first of all our peculiar infirmities. He looks us up and down, just as I have seen a horse-dealer do with a horse; and soon finds out wherein we are faulty. I, a common observer, might think the horse an exceedingly good one, as I see

it running up and down the road, but the dealer sees what I cannot see, and he knows how to handle the creature just in such quarters and at such points that he soon discovers any hidden mischief. Satan knows how to look at us and reckon us up from heel to head, so that he will say of this man, "His infirmity is lust," or of that other, "He hath a quick temper," or of this other, "He is proud," or of that other, "He is slothful." The eye of malice is very quick to perceive a weakness, and the hand of enmity soon takes advantage of it. When the arch-spy finds a weak place in the wall of our castle, he takes care to plant his battering-ram and begin his siege. You may conceal, even from your dearest friend, your infirmity, but you will not conceal it from your worst enemy. He has lynx eyes, and detects in a moment the joint in your harness. He goes about with a match, and though you may think you have covered all the gunpowder of your heart, yet he knows how to find a crack to put his match through, and much mischief will he do, unless eternal mercy shall prevent.

He takes care also to consider our frames and slates of mind. If the devil would attack us when our mind is in certain moods, we should be more than a match for him: he knows this, and shuns the encounter. Some men are more ready for temptation when they are distressed and desponding; the fiend will then assail them. Others will be more liable to take fire when they are jubilant and full of joy; then will he strike his spark into the tinder. Certain persons, when they are much vexed and tossed to and fro, can be made to say almost anything; and others, when their souls are like perfectly placid waters, are just then in a condition to be navigated by the devil's vessel. As the worker in metals knows that one metal is to be worked at such a heat, and another at a different temperature; as those who have to deal with chemicals know that at a certain heat one fluid will boil, while another reaches the boiling-point much earlier, so Satan knows exactly the temperature at which to work us to his purpose. Small pots boil directly they are put on the fire, and so little men of quick temper are soon in a passion; larger vessels require more time and coal before they will boil, but when they do boil, it is a boil indeed, not soon forgotten or abated. The enemy, like a fisherman, watches his fish, adapts his bait to his prey; and knows in what seasons and times the fish are most likely to bite. This hunter of souls comes upon us unawares, and often we are overtaken in a fault, or caught in a trap through an unwatchful frame of mind. That rare collector of choice sayings, Thomas Spencer, has the following, which is much to the point:- The chameleon when he lies on the grass to catch flies

and grasshoppers, taketh upon him the color of the grass, as the polypus doth the color of the rock under which he lurketh that the fish may boldly come near him without any suspicion of danger. In like manner, Satan turneth himself into that shape which we least fear, and sets before us such objects of temptation as are most agreeable to our natures, that so he may the sooner draw us into his net; he sails with every wind, and blows us that way which we incline ourselves through the weakness of nature. Is our knowledge in matter of faith deficient? He tempts us to error. Is our conscience tender? He tempts us to scrupulosity, and too much preciseness. Hath our conscience, like the ecliptic line, some latitude? He tempts us to carnal liberty. Are we bold spirited? He tempts us to presumption. Are we timorous and distrustful? He tempteth us to desperation. Are we of a flexible disposition? He tempteth us to inconstancy. Are we stiff? He labors to make obstinate heretics, schismatics, or rebels of us. Are we of an austere temper? He tempteth us to cruelty. Are we soft and mild? He tempteth us to indulgence and foolish pity. Are we hot in matters of religion? He tempteth us to blind zeal and superstition. Are we cold? He tempteth us to Laodicean lukewarmness. Thus doth he lay his traps, that one way or other, he may ensnare

He also takes care to consider our position among men. There are a few persons who are most easily tempted when they are alone; they are the subjects then of great heaviness of mind, and they may be driven to most awful crimes: perhaps the most of us are more liable to sin when we are in company. In some company I never should be led into sin; into another society I could scarcely venture. Many are so full of levity, that those of us who are inclined the same way can scarcely look them in the face without feeling our besetting sin set a-going; and others are so sombre, that if they meet a brother of like mould, they are pretty sure between them to invent an evil report of the goodly hand. Satan knows where to overtake you in a place where you lie open to his attacks; he will pounce upon you, swoop like a bird of prey from the sky, where he has been watching for the time to make his descent with a prospect of success.

How, too, will he consider our condition in the world! He looks at one man, and says, "That man has property,; it is of no use my trying such-and-such arts with him; but here is another man who is very poor, I will catch him in that net." Then, again, he looks at the poor man, and says, "Now, I cannot tempt him to this folly, but I will lead the rich man into it." As the sportsman has a gun for wild fowl, and another for deer and game, so has

Satan a different temptation for various orders of men. I do not suppose that the Queen's temptation ever will annoy Mary the kitchen-maid. I do not suppose, on the other hand, that Mary's temptation will ever be very serious to me. Probably you could escape from mine—I do not think you could; and I sometimes fancy I could bear yours — though I question if I could. Satan knows, however, just where to smite us, and our position, our capabilities, our education, our standing in society, our calling, may all be doors through which he may attack us. You who have no calling at all, are in peculiar peril—I wonder the devil does not swallow you outright. The most likely man to go to hell is the man who has nothing to do on earth. I say that seriously. I believe that there cannot happen a much worse evil to a person than to be placed where he has no work; and if I should ever be in such a state, I would get employment at once, for fear I should be carried off, body and soul, by the evil one. Idle people tempt the devil to tempt them. Let us have something to do, let us keep our minds occupied, for, if not, we make room for the devil. Industry will not make us gracious, but the want of industry may make us vicious. Have always something on the anvil or in the fire.

*“In books, or work, or healthful play,  
I would be busy too,  
For Satan finds some mischief still  
For idle hands to do.”*

So Watts taught us in our childhood, and so let us believe in our manhood. Books, or works, or such recreations as are necessary for health, should occupy our time; for if I throw myself down in indolence, like an old piece of iron, I must not wonder that I grow rusty with sin.

Nor have I done yet. Satan, when he makes his investigations, notices all the objects of our affection. I doubt not when he went round Job's house, he observed it as carefully as thieves do a jeweller's premises when they mean to break into them. They very cunningly take account of every door, window, and fastening: they fail not to look at the next-door house; for they may have to reach the treasure through the building which adjoins it. So, when the devil went round, jotting down in his mind all Job's position, he thought to himself, “There are the camels and the oxen, the asses, and the servants—yes, I can use all these very admirably.” “Then,” he thought, “there are the three daughters! There are the ten sons, and they go feasting—I shall know where to catch them, and if I can just blow the house down when they are feasting, that will afflict the father's mind the more

severely, for he will say ‘O that they had died when they had been praying, rather than when they had been feasting and drinking wine.’ I will put down too in the inventory,” says the devil, “his wife-I dare say I shall want her,” and accordingly it came to that. Nobody could have due what Job’s wife did- none of the servants could have said that sad sentence so stinging- or, if she meant it very kindly, none could have said it with such a fascinating air as Job’s own wife, “Bless God and die,” as it may he read, or “Curse God and die.” Ah, Satan, thou hast ploughed with Job’s heifer, but thou hast not succeeded; Job’s strength lies in his God, not in his hair, or else thou mightest have shorn him as Samson was shorn! Perhaps the evil one had even inspected Job’s personal sensibilities, and so selected that form of bodily affliction which he knew to be most dreaded by his victim. He brought upon him a disease which Job may have seen and shuddered at, in poor men outside the city gates. Brethren, Satan knows quite as much in regard to you. You have a child, and Satan knows that you idolize it. “Ah,” says he, “there is a place for my wounding him.” Even the partner of your bosom may be made a quiver in which hell’s arrows shall be stored till the time may come and then she may prove the bow from which Satan will shoot them. Watch even your neighbor and her that lieth in your bosom, for you know not how Satan many get an advantage over you. Our habits, our joys, our sorrows, our retirements, our public positions, all may he made weapons of attack by this is desperate foe of the Lord’s people. We have snares everywhere; in our bed and at our table, in our house and in the street. There are gins and trap-falls in company; there mire pits when we are alone. We may find temptations in the house of God as well as in the world; traps in our high estate, and deadly poisons in our abasement. We must not expect to be rid of temptations till we have crossed the Jordan, and then, thank God, we are beyond gunshot of the enemy. The last howling of the dog of hell will he heard as we descend into the chill waters of the black stream, but when we hear the hallelujah of the glorified, we shall have done within the black prince for ever and for ever.

### **III. Satan considered but THERE WAS A HIGHER CONSIDERATION WHICH OVERRODE HIS CONSIDERATION.**

In times of war, the sappers and miners of one party will make a mine, and it is a very common counteractive for the sappers and miners of the other party to counter-mine by undermining the first mine. This is just what God does with Satan. Satan is mining, amid he thinks to light the fusee and to blow up God’s building, but all the while God is undermining him, and he



blows up Satan's mine before he can do any mischief. The devil is the greatest of all fools. He has more knowledge but less wisdom than any other creature, he is more subtle than all the beasts of the field, but it is well called subtlety, not wisdom. It is not true wisdom; it is only another shape of folly. All the while that Satan was tempting Job, he little knew that he was answering God's purpose, for God was looking on and considering the whole of it, and holding the enemy as a man holds a horse by its bridle. The Lord had considered exactly how far he would let Satan go. He did not the first time permit him to touch his flesh-perhaps that was more than Job at that time could have borne. Have you never noticed that if you are in good strong bodily health you can bear losses and crosses, and even bereavements with something like equanimity? Now that was the case with Job. Perhaps if the disease had come first and the rest had followed, it might have been a temptation too heavy for him, but God who knows just how far to let the enemy go, will say to him, "Thus far, and no farther." By degrees he became accustomed to his poverty; in fact, the trial had lost all its sting the moment Job said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." That enemy was slain- nay it was buried and this was the funeral oration, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." When the second trial came, the first trial had qualified Job to bear the second. It may be a more severe trial for a man in the possession of great worldly wealth suddenly to be deprived of the bodily power of enjoying it, than to lose all first, and then lose the health necessary to its enjoyment. Having already lost all, he might almost say, "I thank God that now I have nothing to enjoy, and therefore the loss of the power to enjoy it is not so wearisome. I have not to say, "How I wish I could go out in my fields and see to my servants, for they are all dead. I do not wish to see my children-they are all dead and gone-I am thankful that they are; better so, than that they should see their poor father sit on a dunghill like this." He might have been almost glad if his wife had gone too, for certainly she was not a very particular mercy when she was spared; mind possibly, if he had had all his children about him, it might have been a harder trial than it was. The Lord who weighs mountains in scales, had meted out his servant's woe.

Did not the Lord also consider how he should sustain his servant under the trial? Beloved, you do not know how blessedly our God poured the secret oil upon Job's fire of grace while the devil was throwing buckets of water on it. He saith to himself, "If Satan shall do much, I will do more; if he takes away much, I will give more; if he tempts the man to curse, I will fill

him so full of love to me that he shall bless me. I will help him; I will strengthen him; yea, I will uphold him with the right hand of my righteousness." Christian, take those two thoughts amid put them under your tongue as a wafer made with honey-you will never be tempted without express license from the throne where Jesus pleads, and, on the other hand, when he permits it, he will with the temptation make a way of escape, or give you grace to stand under it.

In the next place, the Lord considered how to sanctify Job by this trial. Job was a much better man at the end of the story than he was at the beginning. He was "a perfect and an upright man" at first but there was a little pride about him. We are poor creatures to criticise such a man as Job-but still there was in him just a sprinkling of self-righteousness. I think, and his friends brought it out. Eliphaz and Zophar said such irritating things, that poor Job could not help replying in strong terms about himself that were rather too strong, one thinks; there was a little too much self-justification. He was not proud as some of us are, of a very little-he had much to be proud of, as the world would allow-but yet there was the tendency to be exalted with it; and though the devil did not know it, perhaps if he had left Job alone, that pride might have run to seed, and Job might have sinned; but he was in such a hurry, that he would not let the ill seed ripen, but hastened to cut it up, and so was the Lord's tool to bring Job into a more humble, and consequently a more safe and blessed state of mind. Moreover, observe how Satan was a lacquey to the Almighty! Job all this while was being enabled to earn a greater reward. All his prosperity is not enough; God loves Job so much, that he intends to give him twice the property; he intends to give him his children again; he means to make him a more famous man than ever; a man whose name shall ring down the ages; a man who shall be talked of through all generations. He is not to be the man of Uz, but of the whole world. He is not to be heard of by a handful in one neighborhood, but all men are to hear of Job's patience in the hour of trial. Who is to do this? Who is to fashion the trump of fame through which Job's name is to be blown? The devil goes to the forge, and works away with all his might, to make Job illustrious! Foolish devil! he is piling up a pedestal on which God will set his servant Job, that he may be looked upon with wonder by all ages.

To conclude. Job's afflictions and Job's patience have been a lasting blessing to the Church of God, and they have inflicted incredible disgrace upon Satan. If you want to make the devil angry throw the story of Job in

his teeth. If you desire to have your own confidence sustained, may God the Holy Ghost lead you into the patience of Job. Oh! how many saints have been comforted in their distress by this history of patience! How many have been saved out of the jaw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear by the dark experiences of the patriarch of Uz. O arch fiend, how art thou taken in thine own net! Thou hast thrown a stone which has fallen on thine own head. Thou madest a pit for Job, and hast fallen into it thyself; thou art taken in thine own craftiness. Jehovah has made fools of the wise and driven the diviners mad. Brethren, let us commit ourselves in faith to the care and keeping of God—come poverty, come sickness, come death, we will in all things through Jesus Christ's blood be conquerors, and by the power of his Spirit we shall overcome at the last. I would God we were all trusting in Jesus. May those who have not trusted him be led to begin this very morning, and God shall have all the praise in us all, evermore. Amen.

# PRESENT PRIVILEGE AND FUTURE FAVOR.

NO. 624

**DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MARCH 22ND, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT UPTON CHAPEL.**

“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.”-Deuteronomy 33:27.

THERE is a great satisfaction in having such a text as this, for even if the preacher should not be able to say anything to edification, yet the text itself is rich food for the saints, and may fully satisfy their hunger. Let but a child of God really digest such a royal dainty as this, and he shall be as well fed as was Elijah when, waking up, he found under the juniper tree, food, in the strength of which he might go for forty days. This one verse may by the Holy Spirit, be made sufficiently nourishing, to sustain a believer from that place where he now is, to the gates of glory. “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

It is fabled that the swan sings but once, and that just before it dies; so Moses, who had been all his life long a prophet, now closes his career a poet, and dies singing. He praises God, setting him above all gods, and defying all men to find one like unto him, “Who is like unto the God of Jeshurun?” Not satisfied with this, he also exalts in the highest degree all the people, who have God to be their portion. “Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee?” I may say that my text is a combination of the two: he is here extolling God, the everlasting and eternal God who is our refuge, and he is here admiring the privilege of believers who have such a God to rest upon. While we are speaking, therefore, this evening, if you are not profited by our words, yet your hearts may be blessed if you praise God for

his great goodness towards you, and if you also feel melted with holy joy, at the blessed privileges which belong to you as the people of God, in having such a God who is so good to you.

The text naturally divides itself into two parts: the present and the future; in the present, we have the eternal God to be our refuge; in the future, it is written that he shall thrust out the enemy from before us, and shall say, "Destroy them."

**I.** Beginning then, with the first part of the text, THE PRESENT BLESSING appeals to me to give us three distinct thoughts.

God is our shelter; "The eternal God is thy refuge." But the word "refuge," according to many of the best translators, may be read, "mansion," or "abiding place," so here comes a second thought, that God is our abode. Then the next sentence gives us the third thought, "And underneath are the everlasting arms," so that God is our support, as well as our shelter and our abode.

**1.** We will begin our meditation, in the Spirit's power, by considering God as our shelter. The children of Israel, while they were in Egypt, and in the wilderness, were a type of God's visible Church on earth. Moses was speaking primarily of them, but, secondarily, of all the chosen ones of God in every age. Now, as God was the shelter of his ancient people Israel, so is he the refuge of his saints through all time. And, first, he was eminently their shelter when they were under bondage and the yoke was heavy. When they had to make bricks without straw, and the task-masters oppressed them, then the people cried unto the Lord, and God heard their cry, and sent unto them his servant Moses. So also, there often comes to men a time when they begin to feel the oppression of Satan. I believe that many ungodly men feel the slavery of their position. Even some of those who are never converted, have sense enough to feel at times that the service of Satan is a hard one, yielding but little pleasure, and involving awful risks. Some men cannot long go on making bricks without straw, without being more or less conscious that they are in the house of bondage. These, who are not God's people, under the pressure of mind consequent upon a partial discovery of their state, turn to some form of pleasure, or self-righteousness, in order to forget their harden and yoke; but God's elect people, moved by a higher power, are led to cry unto their God. It is one of the first signs of a chosen soul, that it seems to know, as if by heavenly instinct, where its true refuge is. Dear brethren and sisters, you recollect,

that although you knew but little of Christ, though in doctrinal matters you were very dark, though you did not understand, perhaps, even your own need, yet there was a something in you that made you pray, and gave you to see that only at the mercy-seat could you find your refuge. Before you were a Christian, before you could say—"Christ is mine," your bedside was the witness to many flowing tears, when your aching heart poured itself out before God, perhaps in strains like these—"O God, I want something; I do not know what it is I want, but I feel a heaviness of spirit; my mind is burdened, and I feel that thou only canst unburden me. I know that I am a sinner; oh, that thou wouldest forgive me! I hardly understand the plan of salvation, but one thing I know, that I want to be saved; I would arise and go unto my Father: my heart panteth to make thy bosom my refuge." Now, I say that this is one of the first indications that such a soul is one of God's chosen, for it is true, just as it was of Israel in Egypt, that God is the refuge of his people, even when they are under the yoke.

When captivity is led captive, the Eternal God becomes the refuge of his people from their sins. The Israelites were brought out of Egypt; they were free; albeit they were marching they knew not whither, yet their chains were snapped; they were emancipated, and needed not to call any man "Master." But see, Pharaoh is wroth, and he pursues them; with his horses and his chariot he hastens after them. The enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them." Thus also there is a period in the spiritual life, when sin labors to drag back the sinner who has newly escaped from it. Like hosts ready for battle, all the poor sinner's past iniquities hurry after him, and overtake him in a place where his way is hedged in. The poor fugitive would escape, but he cannot; what then, must he do? You remember that then Moses cried unto the Lord. When nothing else could be found to afford shelter to the poor escaped slaves, when the Red Sea rolled before them, and the mountains shut them in on either side, and an angry foe pursued them, there was one road which was not stopped up, and that was the king's highway upward to the throne, the way to their God, and therefore they began at once to travel that road, lifting up their hearts in humble prayer to God, trusting that he would deliver them. You know the story too well for me to need to repeat it here; how the uplifted rod divided the watery deeps, how the people passed through the sea as a horse through the wilderness, and how the Lord brought all the hosts of Egypt into the depths of the sea, that he might utterly destroy them, so that not one of them was left, and those who

had seen them one day saw them no more for ever. Beloved, in this sense God is the refuge of his people still. Our sins which pursued us so hotly have been drowned in the depths of the Savior's blood. They sank to the bottom like stones, the depths have covered them, there is not one, no, not one of them left, and we, standing upon the shore in safety, can shout in triumph over our drowned sins, "Sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously, and all our iniquities hath he cast into the midst of the sea."

While God is thus the refuge of his people under the yoke, and when sin seeks to overcome them, he is also their refuge in times of want. The children of Israel journeyed into the wilderness, but there was nothing for them to feed upon there; the arid sand yielded them neither leeks, nor garlic, nor cucumbers; and no brooks or rivers, like the Nile, were there to quench their thirst; they would have famished, if they had been left to depend upon the natural productions of the soil. They came to Marab, where there was a well, but the water was very bitter; at other stations there were no wells whatever, and even bitter water was not to be had. What then? Why, the unfailing refuge of God's people in the wilderness was prayer. Moses, their representative, always betook himself to the Most High, at times falling upon his face in agony, and at other seasons climbing to the top of the hill, and there pleading in solemn communion with God, that he would deliver the people; and you have heard full often how men did eat angels' food in the desert; how Jehovah rained bread from heaven upon his people in the howling wilderness, and how he smote the rock, and waters gushed forth. You have not forgotten how the strong wind blew, and brought them flesh, so that they eat and were satisfied Israel had no need unsupplied; their garments waxed not old, and though they went through the wilderness, their feet grew not sore. God supplied all their wants. We in our land must go to the baker, the butcher, the clothier, and many others, in order to equip ourselves fully, but the men of Israel went to God for everything. We have to store up our money and buy this in one place, and that in the other, but the Eternal God was their refuge and their resort for everything, and in every time of want they had nothing to do but to lift up their voice to him. Now it is just so with us spiritually. Faith sees our position to-day to be just that of the children of Israel then: whatever our wants are, the Eternal God is our refuge. God has promised you that your bread shall be given you, and that your water shall be sure. He who gives spirituals will not deny temporals; the Mighty Master will never suffer you to perish, while he has it in his power to succor you. Go to him,

whatever may be the trouble which weighs you down. Do not suppose your case too bad, for nothing is too hard for the Lord, and dream not that he will refuse to undertake temporals as well as spirituals; he careth for you in all things. In everything you are to give thanks, and surely in everything by prayer and supplication, you may make known your wants unto God. In times when the cruse of oil is ready to fail, and the handful of meal is all but spent, then go to the all-sufficient God, and you shall find that they who trust in him shall not lack any good thing.

Furthermore, our God is the refuge of his saints when their enemies rage. When the host was passing through the wilderness they were suddenly attacked by the Amalekites. Unprovoked, these marauders of the desert set upon them, and smote the hindermost of them, but what did Israel do? The people did not ask to have a strong body of horsemen, hired out of the land of Egypt for their refuge, or even if they did wish it, he who was their wiser self, Moses, looked to another arm than that of man, for he cried unto God. How glorious is that picture of Moses, with uplifted hands, upon the top of the hill giving victory to Joshua in the plain below. Those uplifted arms were worth ten thousand men to the hosts of Israel; nay, twice ten thousand had not so easily gotten a victory, as did those two extended arms, which brought down Omnipotence itself from heaven. This was Israel's master-weapon of war, their confidence in God. Joshua shall go forth with men of war, but the Lord, Jehovah-nissi, is the banner of the fight, and the giver of the victory. Thus, dear friends, the Eternal God is our refuge. When our foes rage, we need not fear their fury. Let us not seek to be without enemies, but let us take our case and spread it before God. We cannot be in such a position, that the weapons of our foes can hurt us, while the promise stands good: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." Though earth and hell should unite in malice, the Eternal God is our castle and stronghold, securing to us an everlasting refuge.

To close our remarks upon this point,-when their falls into sin had cursed the people of God, and provoked the Most High, so that he sent fiery serpents among them, even then the Eternal God was their refuge. When we are conscious that sin has brought us into any mischief or sorrow, we are apt to feel-" I must not go to God with this, because it is clearly the natural and inevitable result of my sin, it is a rod of my own making." Yes, but we may go even with that, for if the Lord should send the fiery



serpents, still, you must fly into the arms of that very God who has sent the serpents to bite you; for it is he, and he alone, who can lift up the brazen serpent before your tearful eye, and give you life through looking thereon. We make a mistake when we imagine that we may not go to God as sinners; we may feel unworthy to go, but we must not think that we shall be unwelcome. I do not go to my Heavenly Father in times of need, because I feel there are excellencies in me, which will qualify me for receiving his help, but I go, because I feel unfitted to be blessed, and am therefore anxious for the blessing; I go because I feel unworthy of deliverance, and am the more desirous that I may get deliverance from the God of Grace.

The Eternal God, then, is our refuge in a thousand ways. I have only given you a few hints on this part of the subject, but we will sum them up, and then you can enlarge on them at your leisure. Under the yoke, before sin is forgiven, if you are a child of God, the Eternal God is your refuge; when you have escaped from sin and the past haunts you, still the Eternal God is your refuge; when, in the wilderness, your wants press you down, whether they are temporal or spiritual, then the Eternal God is your refuge; and when your enemies attack you, or your own guilt has brought you into such a position that God himself chastises you sharply, still, even then it holds good and true that, the Eternal God is your refuge, if you believe in him.

**2.** Now take the second thought with brevity, The Eternal God is our mansion, our dwelling, our abiding place. The children of Israel had no other, and therefore if God were not their dwelling-place, they were houseless. Pilgrims of the weary foot; they found no city to dwell in; at eventide they pitched their tents, but they struck them again in the morning; the trumpet sounded and they were up and away; if they were in a comfortable valley for one day, yet that relentless trumpet bade them resume their wearisome march through the wilderness in the morning; and, perhaps, they thought they lingered the longest where an encampment was least desirable. Nevertheless they always had a dwelling-place in their God. If I might use such a description without seeming to be fanciful, I would say that the great cloudy canopy which covered them all day long from the heat of the sun, was their roof-tree, and that the blazing pillar which protected them by night, was their family fireside. God himself dwelt in the very midst of them in the bright shining light, the Shekinah, within the holy place, and up from the very spot there rose the great pillar which was cloud

by day and fire by night, and so, within the compass of God's protecting presence they found a perpetual abode. So Moses sings, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." Wherever they were, if they were but under the shadow of that cloud they were quite at home, and whenever they got within the radius of the bright pillar of fire, they felt that they were not away from the family circle. Now I hope that many of us can say that the Eternal God is our dwelling-place.

*"Home, home,  
Sweet home,  
There's no place like home."*

says the song, and certainly if God be our home, the song has a depth of sweetness in it. At home one feels safe. An Englishman's house is his castle; who shall intrude upon him there? When the bolt is drawn, when the curtains are closed, when the family gathers round the fire-side, then we have shut the world out, and all our enemies' babbling tongues, and we dwell in quiet. So, when we get to our God, not bolts of brass nor gates of iron could guard God's people so well, as that wall of fire which Jehovah is to all his chosen. When we draw near to God in sweet communion, we feel as if the devil himself were dumb.

*"Then, let the earth's old pillars shake,  
And all the wheels of nature break,  
Our stedfast souls shall fear no more,  
Than solid rocks when billows roar."*

At home, too, we take our rest. Out in the world, in the workshop, we toil until the sweat streams from our face; in the pulpit, in the midst of our congregations, our mind is so active and on the alert, that the brain is often wearied, but at home we cast ourselves down upon the couch, and feel that now the day's work is over, and that the happy evening of rest has come. When I get to my God, no servile works have I to do, no hewing of wood and drawing of water, like a Gibeonite, in God's house; but here I am, his servant, happy in his service, and finding sweet rest in what I do for him. "We that have believed, do enter into rest," and there is a peace which "passeth all understanding, which keeps our heart and mind, through Christ Jesus."

At home we let our hearts loose. We cast aside all dignity there: we are no longer on our guard like men in armor; we are not afraid that our children will misunderstand us, or that our dear ones will misconstrue our words

and sentiments; we feel at ease. So is it when we are with our God. I dare tell him what I dare not tell anyone else; there is no secret of my heart which I would not pour into his ear; there is no wish that might be deemed foolish or ambitious by others, which I would not communicate to him; for surely if “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,” the secrets of them that fear him ought to be, and must be, with their Lord.

It is at home, if anywhere, that a man is thoroughly happy and delighted. He takes his soul’s best solace there; his eyes sparkle most at his own fire-side; whatever the man may be abroad, with all his cares and his troubles, he looks to getting home, as going to the place of his delight. So I trust it is with us and our God. We go out, like Noah’s dove; with weary wing we fly over the watery waste, ready to flag and drop; but we come back again, like that same dove, into Noah’s hand, and there we find our resting-place for ever.

It is for home that a man works and labors. I am sure when I see the workers filling the streets, just when work is over, that the most of them have a home to go to, for the sake of which they toil. What makes that man work so hard? Why, there are three little ones at home who must be fed. How is it that he is content to go through so much toil, but that there is a wife at home dear to his soul, and for her and the babes he fights the battle of life bravely. Be it never so homely; be it up never so many pairs of stairs, yet the thought of that little room and of the dear ones there at home, gives strength to the man to bear his burden, and helps his fingers to fly the quicker over his work. In this sense, too, I think we can say that our gracious God is our home, our mansion-house. The love of God strengthens us. We do but think of him in the person of his dear Son, and a glimpse of the suffering face of the Redeemer constrains us to labor. We feel that we must work, for we have brethren yet to be saved; we have uncalled ones yet to be brought in; we have the head of Christ to crown; we have the Father’s heart to make glad, by bringing home to him his wayward and wandering sons.

We will pause here, and see if we can say, “Yes, ‘tis true, Lord; thou art, as the Eternal God, our mansion-house and dwelling-place.” I pray you, dear friends, do not say this in words, unless you know in truth, that the Eternal God is your dwelling-place.

**3.** We must be very brief on the third part of this present privilege—“Underneath are the everlasting arms.” This means that God is our

support, and our support just when we begin to sink. We want support when we are sinking, and by the arms being “underneath,” it seems that this support is given just when we are going down. At certain seasons the Christian sings very low in humiliation. He has a deep sense of his own sin; he is humbled before God, till he scarce knows how to lift up his face and pray, because he appears, in his own sight, so abject, so mean, so base, so worthless. Well, child of God, remember that when thou art at thy worst, yet “underneath thee are the everlasting arms,” Christ’s atonement dives deeper than thy sin. Sin may sink thee never so low, but the great atonement is still under all; I will give you a text which proves it. “He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him.” You may have gone very low, but you can never have gone so low as “the uttermost.” Here is another. “All manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven unto men.” You have plunged into nearly all sorts of sin, but you have not gone into “all manner of sin,” or if you have, it may be forgiven, so that this promise goes underneath you. The love of God, the power of the blood, and the prevalence of the intercession, are deeper down than sin with all its hell-born vileness can ever sink the sinner, while breath is in his nostrils.

Again, the Christian sometimes sinks very deeply in sore trial from without. He loses his property; his children die; his wife is carried to the grave; every earthly prop is cut away. What then? He goes down, down, down; yet still underneath him are the everlasting arms. You cannot sink so deep in distress and affliction, but what the covenant grace of an ever-faithful God will he still lower than you are, even when at your very lowest. Look at your Savior; you are never so low as he was. Perhaps you cannot pay your rent, and you are to be turned out of that little room, this is falling low indeed; but what did your Savior say- “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay my head.” I have supposed you to be in a very sad case, but, you see, underneath you there are the sufferings of Christ. Perhaps your friends have forsaken you; yes, but hear him- “He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me;” he is deeper in the mire than you. You are very, very, very poor, but see, there he hangs upon the cross-stripped, naked, without a rag to cover him; left and deserted by all; you have gone very far, but not so far as that. Jesus represents the great goodness of God in its communion with your need, and in him your God puts underneath you his everlasting arms.

Possibly you are sinking very deep down, under trouble from within. You have felt such vexation of spirit as you never thought you could have known; you have waged such a conflict as you never dreamed of; the fountains of the great deep have been broken up; and, as a deluge, sin threatens to cover your spirit, and drown all the life in your heart. Beloved, you cannot even there be brought so low as Christ was, for what did he say—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God is still with you to be your succor, and if you have lost the light of your Father's countenance, yet you have not lost it to so great an extent as your Savior did; you have not yet sweat "great drops of blood;" you have not yet prayed with strong crying and tears, and found that the cup could not be removed altogether. You have not yet descended into the depths, as your Savior did; and so we will take it for granted, that underneath you, wherever you may be, there are the everlasting arms. I think I see the devil trying to drown a believer, but underneath are the everlasting arms, says he, "I will have him yet," and down he dives lower still, but the everlasting arms are even there. Why, see what he did with Jonah. He got him into the whale's belly, but he was not content with that. The whale, of course, was near the surface when it first sucked Jonah in, but it goes down, perhaps half-a-mile; it must go deeper yet, and so it stirs up the deep in its pain, for it has an indigestible morsel within, and it does not know what to do with it; it plunges down, down, DOWN, till Jonah says he went to the bottoms of the mountains, and the weeds were wrapped about his head, and the earth with her bars was about him for ever: yet even then, "underneath were the everlasting arms," and therefore the whale comes up, and Jonah stands upon the dry land once more. So shall it be with you, beloved, for in your worst trials and times of difficulty, underneath you are the everlasting arms.

And this, also, I may give you by way of comfort, in any weary labors in which you may be engaged. There be some of God's servants who feel as if they would willingly die; for to serve God, though very pleasant, is at times very hard work; and when one is fagged in God's service, and is ready to drop, one will cry out, "Oh! when shall the day of rest come?" Courage, courage, thou fainting soldier; underneath are the everlasting arms: thou shalt have strength equal to thy day; thy shoes shall be iron and brass; thou shalt end thy journey well, and thou shalt fight the fight till the victory comes.

At last, when death comes, the promise shall still hold good. We shall stand in the midst of Jordan, and, like poor Christian, it is possible that we should begin to sink; but may we have some Hopeful with us then, to say, as Hopeful did to Christian, “Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, it is good;” for underneath us there should be the everlasting arms. You may be full of pain and anguish, and the spirit may sink into a spiritual death even before the natural death comes on; you may feel dying to be dreadful work, but still, if the worst should come to the worst, you shall yet in the hour of extremity win the victory, you shall triumph over death, and enter into the presence of God, and bless his name because “underneath you are the everlasting arms.”

I can scarcely venture on the second part of my subject to night at all, for we have not done with the first point. I wish you to notice those two words which are the pith of the text. “The Eternal God,” “everlasting arms.” “The Eternal God.” Here is antiquity. The God who was before all worlds is for ever my God. Oh! how I love that word “eternal;” but, brethren and sisters, there are some people who do not believe in an Eternal God, at any rate they do not believe in him as being theirs eternally. They do not believe that they belonged to Christ before they were born; they have a notion that they only had God to be theirs when they believed on him for the first time. They do not believe in covenant settlements, and eternal decrees, and the ancient purposes of the Most High; but let me say, that for comfort, there is no thought more full of sweetness than that of an Eternal God engaged in Christ Jesus to his people; to love, and bless, and save them all. One who has made them the distinguished objects of his discriminating regard from all eternity. It is the ETERNAL God. And then there are the “everlasting arms,” arms that will never flag, arms that will never grow weary, arms that will never lose their strength. They put the two words “eternal” and “everlasting” together, and they remind us of another sweet word-immutability. An everlasting God that fainteth not, neither is weary, that changeth not, and turneth not from his promise, such is the God we delight to adore and to use as our eternal shelter, our dwelling-place, and our support.

**II.** The second part of the subject, AS TO THE FUTURE, I cannot dwell upon for want of time, but only give you an outline of what one might have said upon it if there had been opportunity.

He who has been our God in the past will certainly be our God in the future, and in the future we have two things to comfort us; divine work, and we have a divine word. Here is a divine work. He will thrust out our enemies before us. Whatever your difficulties may be, whatever your sins may be against which you have to contend, remember, Jehovah leads the van and crushes your foes before you come to them. You have to fight, Christian, with vanquished enemies, and it is an easy thing when you have to overcome a dragon, who has had his head broken already by your risen Lord. Hence Dr. Watts makes us sing for our comfort—"Hell and thy sins resist thy course,

*"But hell and sin are vanquished foes,  
Thy Savior nailed them to the cross,  
And sung the triumph when he rose."*

Before you get to your difficulties, your God will have removed them. The stone was laid at the mouth of the sepulcher, and the women said, "Who shall roll away the stone;" but when they arrived at the spot, they found that the stone had been rolled away by an angel long before. March on, Christian, Jordan may be very deep, but as soon as the feet of God's priests touch the border of the river it shall be dried up. You shall have before you ten thousand things which may appal you, but if you will but go on in the strength of faith, they shall prove to be but the shadows which disappear when the sun ariseth. There is divine work always going on before God's people; his shield always goes in front; his sword always cuts and clears the way, and we have but to follow where he leads. When the children of Israel passed over Jordan, the priests who bare the ark first dipped their feet in the stream, and it parted before the servants of the Lord because God was between the cherubim. So in every crossing which lies in the path to the city of our God, that better city, Jerusalem the golden, we see the footprints of one who is our Priest, touched with a sense of our infirmities and griefs, because he has endured the same before us; who has planted his feet in the darkest depths and made a path through the mightiest waters, so that we need not fear, but may boldly plunge in, assured that we only follow him, whose presence will ever enable us to say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." We follow the Captain of our salvation, who says, "Come on, follow me." He goes before. Every dart that wounds you passes by him. Yea, he has felt the first smart of each poisoned arrow in the devil's quiver, and the venomous power has been

washed away in his blood. There is not a weapon in hell's armoury whose edge has not been turned on the armor of our great Champion; the keenness of every blade is gone since it was buried in his wounds. When Jacob wrestled with the nameless one till the break of day, he came out of the contest with one sinew withered, so that he halted to his grave; and thus each of our foes has received a touch from the finger of him "who comes up from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of his strength:" and that touch has crippled the power of our enemies, they are spoiled and robbed of much of their satanic might, because they have been beneath the heel of him who has trodden down all our foes beneath his feet.

Still, we are not to be idle, for we have next, a divine word. He shall thrust out our enemies, but he will also say, "Destroy them." We have to take God's Word, and to be obedient to it in the future. Whatever sins we have, there is only one thing to be done with them, and that is, to "destroy them." A man has a number of faults, and he says, "Well, sir, there is my drunkenness, and my swearing, and so on; I am quite agreeable to what you say, I will destroy them; I will hang them on a gallows as high as that on which Haman would have hanged Mordecai; but, sir, I have little a trick in my trade; I should not like to tell everybody of it; it is a very profitable one, and I do not think it is so very bad, for nearly everybody else in the trade does it. Do not you think the best way would be to practice it, and give part of the money I get by it to God's cause, I will be very careful, and do it only when compelled." My dear friend, I have only one thing to say to you about your sin, and that is, destroy it; do not try to make it better, to dress it up, swear it in, and make a soldier of it for Christ; no, but destroy it; this is your work. If thine eye offend thee, "pluck it out." "Oh," says another, "but I have a very bad temper; I sometimes fly into a passion, I think I must try to get over it by degrees, but still I can make a great many excuses for myself, and am I not quite right in doing so?" My dear sir, I can only say one thing, and that is, "destroy it," for the only proper treatment of sin, is to cut it off and cast it from thee. Do not pamper it or excuse it, but smite it, smite it to the heart if you can, and never be satisfied till you have utterly destroyed it. Look at Saul. He has been against the Amalekites, and he brings home a very beautiful flock of sheep and bullocks, and so on. He is told to destroy them all, but he brings them home, and Agag with them. Why did he not kill Agag? Well, he was such a gentleman, such a thorough gentleman, that he did not like to kill him; it



was a public duty to sweep the common-place Amalekites out of the way, they were such rascals; but this Agag, why, he walked so delicately, he had such a nice way with him, he was so winning, had such an enchanting face, had the manners and air, in fact, of an Israelite-it was a pity, a great pity to kill him. So Saul brought home the best of the sheep, and the beasts, and the cattle, and Agag with them. But Samuel comes in, and is in no sweet mood when he hears the bleating of the sheep. He demands of Saul- "Hast thou done as God commanded thee?" "Yes I have," said Saul. "Then what mean the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the cattle that I hear?" "Oh," said Saul, "I did not slay them all; I thought I had better spare some of the best of them as an offering unto God, so I kept them alive, and I have also kept Agag." What came of it; did the prophet spare the Amalekite? Nay, verily! Samuel first told Saul that God had put him away from being king, and then he said, "Bring Agag;" and Agag came to him-you can imagine how he would come-and he said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." There he stood, and I think I see Samuel, getting grey then, very grey and not very fit for such service, but he looked for the nearest sword that he could get, and though it is not a prophet's work to kill, yet as soon as he could grasp a sword he hewed Agag in pieces; he was not content to cut his head off, but hewed him in pieces, as a man would chop a block of wood, to show the anger and detestation which God had towards the most princely sins.

Now, Christian, your business with sin is in the Spirit's power to serve it as Samuel did Agag-to hew it in pieces, and show the utmost hatred towards it. So far from making excuses for it, seek to devise ways by which you may mortify it and put it to death.

When the prophet Elijah had received the answer to his prayer, and the fire from heaven had consumed the sacrifice in the presence of all the people, he called upon the assembled Israelites to take the priests of Baal, and, said he, "Let not one escape;" and he took them all down to the brook Kishon and slew them there. So must it be with our sins, each one must die, let not one escape. Spare it not for its much crying. Strike, though it be a darling sin as dear as an Isaac. Strike, for God struck at sin when it was on his Son; even so with stern unflinching purpose, condemn to death that sin which may have been the darling of your heart. Spare it not, because it may make sport or be of use in any way. Remember Samson, how he gathered strength as his locks grew once more, and how he avenged himself upon his foes; beware lest your sins which are only for a while repressed and not

totally destroyed, should rise up again, and with new-found might should hurl you to the ground and bury you in the wreck of your noblest hopes and deeds. You will probably ask how you will be able to accomplish this work. Why, take the promise we have been talking about—"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" If you would triumph over darkness, set yourself in the presence of the Sun of Righteousness. There is no place so well adapted for the discovery of sin, and recovery from its power and guilt, as the immediate presence of God. Get into God's arms, and you will see how to hit at sin, and will gather strength to give the final blow which shall lay the monster in the dust. Job never knew how to get rid of sin half so well as he did when his eye of faith rested on God, and he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. The fine gold of the Christian is oft becoming dim, and the spots will appear upon the surface, showing that we dwell amidst the sons of earth, in a world which lieth in the wicked one. We want some sacred fire which shall consume away the dross, and give us back the brightness we have lost. Go to God, he is a consuming fire, not to your spirit, but to your sins. You may so plead the work of Christ, and the covenant of grace, as to make the very nature of God, which would condemn you out of Christ, to cleanse you, being in Christ Jesus. You will be sanctified by the God who would have destroyed you had you not fled for refuge to the hope set before you. You have strength to overcome sin given you in the covenant of grace; you have strength to drive out your own iniquities; you have strength to win battles for your Master, because in Christ Jesus he has promised to be with you even unto the end. May the past experience stimulate you to future exertion, and let the goodness of God excite you to a sacred jealousy and to a holy revenge against those sins which are hateful in his sight.

May God bless you, brethren, for Christ's sake.

# JESUS APPEARING TO MARY MAGDALENE.

NO. 625

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 16TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.”-Mark 16:9.*

THE doctrine of a risen Savior is exceedingly precious. The resurrection is the corner-stone of the entire building of Christianity. It is the key-stone of the arch of our salvation. It would take us many a discourse to set forth all the streams of living water which flow from this one sacred source, the resurrection of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; but to know that he has risen, and to have fellowship with him as such,-communing with the risen Savior by possessing a risen life,-seeing him leave the tomb by leaving the tomb of worldliness ourselves, this is even still more precious. The doctrine is the basis of the experience, but as the flower is more lovely than the root, so is the experience of fellowship with the risen Savior more lovely than the doctrine itself. I would have you believe that Christ rose from the dead so as to sing of it, and derive all the consolation which it is possible for you to extract from this well-ascertained and well-witnessed fact; but I beseech you rest not contented even there. Brethren and sisters in Christ, I bid you aspire to see Christ Jesus by the eye of faith, and though you may not touch him, yet may you be privileged to converse with him and to know that he is risen, you yourselves being risen in him to newness of life. To know a crucified Savior as having crucified all my sins, is a rich kind of knowledge; and to know a risen Savior as having justified me, and to realize that he has bestowed upon me new life, having given me to be a new creature through his own newness of life this is a high style of experience: short of it, none of us ought to be satisfied to rest. In fine, I

would have you this morning, like the blessed Magdalene, among those to whom Jesus Christ should manifest himself after his resurrection, as he doth not unto the world.

Let us come at once to the consideration of this first appearance of the Savior, after he had left the tomb. He appears to Mary Magdalene. There must have been some reason for the choice. We shall notice first of all, who she was; then, how she sought; and, thirdly, how she found

**I.** First, we shall have to take into consideration this morning who SHE WAS.

Jesus “appeared first to Mary Magdalene.” Why? One answer might be, because he chose to do so. For in his sovereignty he may reveal himself to whomsoever he wills, and he may withhold himself from whomsoever he shall please. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” may be a very grating truth to human ears, but it is truth for all that, and he who doth not acknowledge it, scarcely puts God into his true place as sitting upon the throne and doing as he wills with his own. I should be content to know that he appeared to Mary Magdalene first and not to ask another question if I thought it ill to ask it, for “he is the Lord, and let him do what seemeth him good;” and if he will reveal himself first to her, let it be so; herein I see his grace and say, let his name be magnified in the sovereignty of his love.

But we may go a little into the matter, I think, and perhaps find some reasons. He revealed himself first to Mary Magdalene, a woman. Was it not most meet that a woman should first see the risen Savior. She was first in the transgression, let her be first in the justification. In yon garden she was first to work our woe; let her in that other garden be the first to see him who works our weal. She takes the apple of that bitter tree which brings us all our sorrow; let her be the first to see that mighty gardener, who has planted a tree which brings forth fruit unto everlasting life. A woman let it be, for woman was last at the cross, and last at the sepulcher; let her be earliest to return. The Marys embalmed the Savior, and put him into the tomb; let one of their company be selected to be the first to see him. Sisters in Christ Jesus, there is a curse which falls more heavily on you than on others—a curse which is peculiar to you; but herein you have reason to rejoice, since “Unto you a Child is born, unto you a Son is given.” It is by that child-bearing which brings you sorrow, that we have been delivered, even through the birth of him, the Messiah, Emmanuel, God

with us, whom you are privileged first to see, because he is peculiarly yours. "The seed of the woman who shall bruise the serpent's head."

The text seems to indicate that the particular reason why he appeared to this woman first was, because out of her he had cast seven devils. Perhaps no person mentioned in the Scripture has been more singularly slandered than Mary Magdalene. It has been supposed that she was a harlot, and her name has been appended to societies which have the merciful object of endeavoring to reclaim the fallen. In that sense let me say Magdalene never was a "Magdalene." She was not an unchaste woman. I think I can show you that it is quite impossible that she could have been. She was a woman of substance, and ministered to Christ's necessities; she was possessed of wealth and property, and spent what she had upon the Savior, and was not likely, therefore, to have been one who earned her living by the pitiful trade of her sin. Moreover, she had seven devils, and that, of itself, rendered her utterly incapable, one would think, of having been guilty of the sins of the flesh. A woman, a demoniac, mad with seven devils! Who would dream that a poor creature under so dreadful a torture as this could have been a harlot! The thing is clearly impossible to any thoughtful mind. But mark you, I believe if Magdalene were here herself, she would not regret that her purer name has been appended to these poor fallen ones. Herein she has communion with her Lord and Master, who was "numbered with the transgressors," and who gave himself and all that he had in order that he might lift poor sinners from the degradation into which they have fallen. "No," Magdalene would say, "do not blot my name off from yonder building; do not take it from that Rescue Society; I, though I have been kept from this iniquity, am well content to be the patron of all those who seek to win sinners from their sin." Nevertheless, there is this about it-and here is where the mistake first arose-the possession of a devil is typical, in the Word of God, of sin. When we want to translate the miracle into spiritual meaning we are always compelled to use the indwelling of a devil to be the metaphor, the picture of the indwelling of sin. Now as Mary Magdalene had seven devils, though she was not therefore any the greater sinner, for she could not help the devils being there, yet she was thereby the more polluted; she was sevenfold polluted, and she becomes most rightly the type of the great sinner, the representative, in fact, of the very class of sinners to whom her name has been given. She was not literally such a sinner, but she was typically so, for in her there were seven devils. Typically she stands at the head of those who are the greatest of all sinners

against the law, and goodness, and grace of God, but she was not so except as a type.

Now, I think you see some reason why she should be selected as the first one to be seen by Christ, because she had been a special trophy of Christ's delivering power. In her he had won a special and signal victory over the hosts of hell; a perfect number of those evil spirits had been entrenched within her, and Christ's victorious arm had driven them all out. She should ever be regarded as a most illustrious specimen of what the great Savior can achieve. In this sense, I say, she was fitted to be the first that Jesus Christ should look upon and speak to, because out of all his disciples who were daily with him, I know not of one who had experienced such a cure as that which had fallen to her lot. Let us learn from this, that the greatness of our sin before conversion should never make us think that we may not be specially favored with the very highest grade of fellowship. If Magdalene was not a harlot, yet I say she stands as the type of those who are possessors of seven sins, and deadly and damnable sins too; and inasmuch as this woman is taken into the most intimate communion with Christ, and has the priority even above Peter, and James, and John, there is no reason, poor fallen sinner, why thou shouldst not have as rich a feast at the banquet of divine mercy, as the very best and most chaste, the most upright, pure, and clean. If thou comest to Christ, if the seven devils are cast out of thee, all these things shall never be mentioned against thee; but thou shalt stand on a par with those, who were preserved by providence and restraining grace from going into gross sins. When the prodigal came back, he was not told that he might eat his father's bread, but it must be in the kitchen; he was not told that he might sit at the table, but it must be at the far end, below the salt. No, but he sits at the table as the most honored guest, and his father feasts with him as if he had never gone astray!

So is it evermore with my God, to the chief of sinners. You shall not be permitted to eat the crumbs that fall from the table, but the daintiest viands shall be yours, yea, and if you wish it, and will press forward and seek it, you shall have Benjamin's mess, you shall have more than others. Oh! though you have been black and vile, he can make you so white and fair that he will not blush to treat you as the man in the parable did his little ewe lamb. You shall drink of his cup and sleep in his bosom, and be very, very dear to him, sinner though you have been. This seems to be upon the very surface of the text, that Mary Magdalene was selected to be the first

to see the Savior because she was a woman—a woman out of whom seven devils had been cast—a type of a great sinner.

Again, she was a woman in whom mighty grace had proved its power. It is a well known fact, that devils never went out of men in the Savior's day, willingly. They had always to be cast out. You find them foaming at the mouth as soon as Christ is seen, and when he says, "I command thee to come out of him," the devil tears the man, rolls him in the dust, and subjects him to unusual spasms of pain and agony, before he will depart. Thus seven devils had been driven out of Mary—forced out of her. Mary was no free-willer; her deliverance was achieved by irresistible, eternal, sovereign grace. And surely those are privileged to see most of Christ who know that their salvation is not of man, neither by man, but by the will and power of the gracious God alone. My brethren, there may be some of you who think that the devils went out of you; I know they did not go out of me. They had to be driven out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. There may be some who boast of the freeness of their wills, who think that they can come to Christ of themselves, but Mary did not, for no demoniacs ever sought to find Christ. They rather shunned the presence of the Savior, and cried, "What have we to do with thee; art thou come to torment us before the time." We rather hated grace and despised Christ; offers of mercy were lost upon us; proclamations of pardon, though honestly given, we trampled under foot; it was only when the mighty Jesus, dressed in robes of love, came forth in the greatness of his strength, that we were compelled to yield, and our captivity was led captive by his might. I think that Mary Magdalene was thus selected, because she was a choice instance of irresistible grace.

As soon as the devils were cast out of Mary, she appears to have left whatever her earthly position may have been, and to have become a constant attendant on the Savior. If you will kindly turn to the eighth chapter of Luke, you will see that our Lord was attended not only by men, but by women. "It came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." It appears, then, that Magdalene was one who abode with Christ Jesus, his perpetual and constant companion. Some heard him occasionally she heard

him always. Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus, entertained him with a feast now and then; she was always giving him of her substance. There were many like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who were on Christ's side, but did not take up Christ's cross; she did. In all his afflictions she was afflicted; when he was "despised and rejected of men," so was she. She was with him, bearing his cross, and suffering his reproach. I like the thought of her being with the Savior. How much she must have seen! She saw the most of his miracles. How much she must have heard! She heard, with her own ears, his choice words; yea, and in the secret conclave, where he opened up his parable to his favored disciples, Mary was privileged to be there, with a few other honorable women. I suppose her to have been a woman of ripe years, as probably most of the others were—a matron. She was neglecting no household duties; it is clear she never had any; a woman with seven devils could not have domestic duties. One would think her friends must have been exceedingly glad to have her under the teaching of our Lord; and so long as they knew that she was in health with the Savior, they probably thought her to be in the place most fitting for her, as mad people are supposed to be most fitly attended, when they are accompanied by their keeper or their physician. Having been a demoniac, she was happily freed from all household ties and bonds; and now what if I say that Christ was her father, her brother, her husband, her friend, her children, her everything? He was her family, and there was she, daily with him. We read that when Christ preached a certain truth, "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Not so the Magdalene. Let him preach whatever he might, the woman of Magdala still hung upon his lips. To her every word was honey, every syllable was a pearl. She treasured all, she fed upon all; she abode with Jesus. O dear friends, I wish we could get into this position, when our calling should be to serve Christ, and when our place should be always with Christ. I do not wonder that Christ appeared first to her, when I recollect that Christ had so long been her first, her chief delight. She had nothing in the world but Christ. It strikes me that very likely her being a demoniac had so separated her from all human sympathy that there were none that loved her, none that cared for her, except the disciples and the society she had found through being a follower of Christ; and Jesus, pitying her, would not send her away as he did the most of those whom he cured.

One thing we must not pass over, she spent her substance in relieving his wants. The bag was not often full, while Judas had the keeping of it; and



while there were so many poor, and Christ had such a tender heart, I will be bound to say that no surplus was ever allowed to mould there; but this woman, and the other Marys, took care that it should never be quite empty, and that there should be something for the Savior when he wanted it. She was not the woman who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment over Christ's head, but her whole life long, her constant income was her alabaster box, and she spent what she had, in ministering to the wants of her Lord. Brothers and sisters, if we would see much of Christ, let us serve him. Depend upon it, you that live unto yourselves, that save your wealth when you ought to give it, are not indulged with that fellowship with Jesus which others have, who have consecrated themselves and their substance wholly to the Lord. I am sure that by not giving, you miss infinite pleasure; I speak not now concerning your safety, I believe you are saved through faith in Christ Jesus; but if you do not devote yourselves and all that you have to the Master's cause, you never will be admitted to those choicer joys, to those more intimate fellowships, which belong to those who live close to their Savior in consecration. Find me the happiest Christians, and I am sure they are those who are most attached to their Lord. Tell me who they are that sit oftenest under the banner of his love, and drink deepest draughts from the cup of communion, and I am sure they will be those who give most, who serve best, and who abide closest to the bleeding heart of their dear Lord. Perhaps for this reason Mary was privileged by the grace of God to be the first to see the risen Savior.

## II. The second enquiry was, HOW SHE SOUGHT.

If any of us would have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, how are we to obtain it? We will use her as our guide.

And first, Mary sought the Savior very early in the morning; by which we learn, that we must betimes begin to seek our Lord. If thou canst wait for Christ, and be patient in the hope of having fellowship with him by-and-by, thou wilt never have fellowship at all; for the heart that is fitted for communion is a hungering and a thirsting heart. If a man be hungry you cannot say to him "Be patient; wait!" "My hunger craves," says he, "give me food, I shall die if I am not fed." "But you must not be impatient; you must curb your appetite; wait; be still." But the poor man replies, "I cannot; my hunger is so sharp. Oh, give me bread; I famish, I expire." You may reason with him, but there is no reasoning with a hungry stomach; and when a man's soul begins to hunger and thirst after Christ, it is not "To-

morrow I will see him," but "now! now! now!" To-day, which God calls "the accepted time," the Christian thinks to be the most acceptable time. I would have fellowship with Jesus now: while standing on this platform, mine eyes desire to see him; my head longs to place itself upon his bosom. My soul would cry with the spouse, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." If, then, you want Jesus to reveal himself to you, seek him now where you are. This pew may be as good as the garden. Your own little quiet room when the service is over, will be quite as near to the Savior as was the sepulcher; only seek him at once, and suffer no delays. Come, Jesus come, for the night is far spent! Arise great Sun of Righteousness, and chase my gloom away!

She sought him also, as you will observe, with very great boldness. It is said, she stood at the sepulcher. The disciples had fled. Read the eighth verse, "They went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid." But Mary, we are told in John's account, "stood" at the sepulcher. "They may run who will," said she, "nothing can frighten me when I seek the Lord." There go the women, Mary and Susanna the wife of Chuza; there they go, all frightened. There is Peter, the bold Peter; he takes to his heels; and even John, the loving John, follows after him; but Mary stands still. "Nay," says she, "let the worst come that can, nothing can be worse than losing my Master: if death itself should drag me away, it can only take me into the sepulcher where my Savior went, and perhaps I might find him there; and if so, death were welcome!" Consider how many fears this timid woman must have had. It is not always safe to go abroad early in the morning. Certainly it was not in the city of Jerusalem. When the city was crowded, for a feeble woman to rise early in the morning and go out to the tomb was not safe. And yet she was not afraid. Let the shadows of the morning be still on the earth, she heeds them not; the shadows in her own soul are worse to her. You might have supposed she would have fears of the angels. She was not. She had had dealings with devils, and she was not to be frightened by angels. Seven devils at once dwelt in her. She knew too much of the supernatural to be frightened at the fall of a leaf, or any noise that might make her weaker companions turn pale. If then you would have Christ to be with you, seek him boldly, beloved. Let nothing hold you back. Defy the world; dare its pleasures; laugh at its threats; despise its promises. Count that "the reproach of Christ is greater riches than the

treasures of Egypt." Press on where others flee. Be like a lion where others turn their backs, and Christ will then show himself to you.

She stood at the sepulcher, she sought Christ very faithfully. Some find it hard to stand by a living Savior, but she will stand by a dead one. All the disciples forsook him and fled when he was only in captivity, but she cleaves to him when his body is in the sepulcher. Brave woman! Thou wilt not only stand by the Master, but by the Master's sepulcher. True heroine! Thou lovest even the couch where his dead form sleeps. I would that we sought Christ after this mode, willing to stand by the very form of sound words which has been delivered to us, standing by the doctrine as well as by the person, cleaving and clinging to the very least thing that has to do with Christ, feeling that if he has sanctioned it, it is ours to die for the sepulcher as well as for the man. Oh, if we sought Christ with such faithfulness, we should not long lack the comfort of his presence!

Still note further, John tells us, she "stood without at the sepulcher weeping," which makes me remark that she sought Jesus very earnestly, for as she stood there, not finding him, she wept. I do not read that the others did this. They loved the Savior, but they did not love so much. At any rate, they had not her sensitiveness and delicacy of soul. She wept. I think I know why she wept. "My Savior is gone," said she, "I cannot find him." Then the thoughts of his sad death came rushing full upon her soul. She thought she saw that dreadful scene over again that had made her heart ache and throb. She fancied she saw him again dragged through the howling populace, abused and despised, with his poor back all covered with gore. She thought she beheld once more that blessed body torn with the nails. She marked again the anguish of the fever which came upon him as he hung upon the tree. She had been the last to watch him. She stood and watched him with the other women, and now she cannot bear the thought of all that he has suffered, and the fear that he has gone, gone, gone for ever! She weeps; and the Savior could not bear to see her weep. Methinks those tear-droppings were as spells that bound the Savior captive, and made him come forth and show himself to her. If you want Christ's presence, you are sure to get it if you weep after it! If you have gone so far that you cannot be happy unless he come and say to you, "Thou art my beloved," — if you cannot be contented without a kiss from those dear lips, you will have it. He cannot deny those tears; those are heart-breakers to him; those drops shall burn their way into his soul; you shall look into the face bedewed with tears, and see the comeliness and

beauty of him who was “despised and rejected of men,” if you stand without at the sepulcher weeping.

Nor have I quite done. Mary sought him perseveringly, for as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher. She had been in it, and found nothing: what made her look again? Have not you, when you have been seeking for something which you felt you must find, turned out a drawer, and looked through it carefully, turning over everything, and yet, being exceedingly anxious, you have gone to it once more? you were certain the object was not there, and yet you were so anxious to find it, that you looked again and again; and perhaps you returned six or seven times to the place which you had searched thoroughly well at first, for you were so desirous to find it. It was so with her. She thought, “perhaps my eyes may have been holden: possibly I may not have looked in the right corner: I will even look again;” and so she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher—the tears still flowing from her eyes. This showed her perseverance. Ay, and if we would know Christ, he is not to be found by those who merely call upon him once. Cry to him by the hour together, if he come not to thee. If going into thy chamber once does not give thee a sight of Jesus, go again, go again, go again; for mark me—if thou shouldst be kept waiting seven years for an interview with the great King, if thou shouldst once be favored to see him—if he shall stretch out the silver scepter to thee, thou wilt think thyself all too well rewarded. A thousand, a million years of seeking were well repaid, by one glance from his eyes and one look from his face. Therefore seek perseveringly patiently; anxiously desiring still that the risen Savior would manifest himself to thee.

We have almost done upon this point, but we must note that she sought the Savior only. All her thoughts were concentrated upon him. I think if I had been there, I should have been greatly gratified with a sight of the angels. It strikes me that I should have been for observing what were the forms of beauty which angelic spirits bear. But she seems to have taken no note of them at all, she says to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” What cared she for angels! If as many had come as the seventy thousand chariots of God, they could not have turned away Mary’s thoughts from him. To the gardener, her speech is all full of her Lord, “Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” Mary’s heart was set on one object. Like an arrow shot from the bow, she sped right on to the target of her heart’s desire. And, oh, if Christ be your one and only love, if your heart has cast

out all rivals, if your spirit seeketh him, and crieth out for the Lord, even for the living God, you shall soon come and appear before God.

To close this point, let me say there was much ignorance in Mary. How was it that she sought the living among the dead? There was very little faith in Mary, for faith would have told her that he had risen again on the third day according to his own word. But, oh, there was much love, and Jesus overlooked her want of knowledge and overlooked her weakness of faith, because of the strength of her love. It seems to me that she loved more than John did, for John says, "Then went in that other disciple, and he saw and believed." That is right, John; thou hast most faith. He believes, and then he goes away expecting he should see what he believed; but Mary, though she has far less faith, yet, you will perceive, has so much love, that she will not go away from the sepulcher, but just keeps her place there, watching at the post of his door, not satisfied till she can see him. What love was this! Brethren and sisters, if we would see Jesus, we must love him much. I would God I loved him as my heart desires to love him. I hope you can say,

*"Yes, I love thee, and adore;  
Oh for grace to love thee more!"*

Let us wake ourselves up to greater intensity of affection. He loved us before the stars were made; loved us with his whole heart; loved us to perfection; loved us unto death. Oh, my cold heart, why dost thou not melt? Oh, my adamant heart, why dost thou not dissolve? For such love as this, we ought to give Jesus our warmest affection blazing like coals of juniper; and if we did, we should not be long without finding him, for love would find him out and fetch him to our arms, and we should see him and rejoice in him.

**III.** The last point now comes, and that is, How SHE FOUND HIM. He was present, but she could not see him. Christian, Christ is present here this morning, though thou canst not, perhaps, perceive him. You have not to cry to the Savior to come from heaven to visit you: "Where two or three are met together in my name," saith he, "there am I in the midst of them." Jesus is here; in these aisles and pews, in this area and these galleries-Jesus is here. If thou hast no communion with him, believer, it is because unbelief darkens thine eye, or grief, or care, or sin makes thee blind.

But Jesus Christ was discovered to her by a word. I want you to notice that it was not a sermon, it was one word. It was not a long discourse, but just one word of two syllables, and that not a word of mystery, but a simple word: a word, however, which had this about it, it came from Jesus' lips; it was personal and went home to her. this is all you want, beloved, this morning. Fifty thousand words from me would only weary you, but listen to one word from the lip of the Savior, a personal word, waking the recollections of your spirit, proving that he remembers you, and cheerfully on the strength of that word, your soul may stay on earth and finish her threescore years and ten. That one word was her own name — "Mary." It was spoken just as she had heard it in the days gone by; and, oh, if he would speak to me as he has spoken at the hill Mizar; if he would say of himself as he has done in days never to be forgotten, "I am thy salvation," we should not want any more, one word would be enough. Oh, beloved, keep on seeking Christ and you will find him in a moment. Do not complain if you have not an edifying ministry, or because perhaps this morning the discourse seems dull to you; do not complain because you are lax in prayer, and have not that enlargement you ought to have in divine things; one word will take you up as on the wings of an eagle, and give you joy and pence.

Notice that as soon as the one word was given, her heart owned allegiance by another word. She did not make a long speech. The Master's heart was too full to say more than one word, and so was hers. That one word would naturally be the most fitting for the occasion. What then is the word which suggest itself as being best adapted to a soul in the highest state of devotion? It is a word implying obedience. She said "Master." You can never get into a state of mind for which this confession of allegiance will be a word too cold. No, when your spirit glows the most with heavenly fire, then you will say, "I would serve thee living, dying; thy love has bound me with cords to the horns of the altar; I am thy servant-I am thy servant-thou hast loosed my bonds." If you can say, "Master," this morning, you can say much. If your soul feels that his will is your will, that his law is your love; that you would, if you could, in all things be conformed to his image; then, whether you have ecstasies or no ecstasies, whether you have joys or no joys, you stand in a happy, holy place. He must have said, "Mary," or else you could not have said, "Rabboni."

After she had confessed allegiance, the next impulse was to seek close fellowship; but she made a mistake as we mostly do; she wanted a

manifest, carnal fellowship; so she began to clasp him and to hold him by the feet, and then he said, "Touch me not." We are apt to seek for communion with Christ in a sensuous way. Let us be spiritual, brethren. We shall never have Christ say to us, "Touch me not," if the touch be a touch of faith, and love. He only says, "Touch me not," when we want to handle him with these hands, and see him with these eyes. Let us walk by faith and not by sight; and then we may take him in our arms and keep him there, and hold him and not let him go; and the more endearing we can be with him spiritually, the better he will like it; but we must shake off all those gross ideas which strive to mix with high and heavenly enjoyment. if you feel a panting this morning after near and close communion do not restrain it; press forward, put your hands into his side, and your finger into the print of the nails. I know that worldlings will not understand me, but believers will. Let me assure you there is a communion with Christ, which is quite as real, as if we had the privilege which Thomas had. My own soul has seen the Savior and talked with him; though these eyes cannot see him, though these lips cannot speak with him, and this ear cannot hear him, yet my soul's mouth has kissed him, and my soul's ear has heard him, and my heart's mouth has blessed him ten thousand times, and I hope to do it yet again, and will never be satisfied until I can do it continually. Press on, beloved: you may say as the Divine Song does, "Oh that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee. "Oh, beloved, hold communion with him, feed on him, for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.

Further we may notice, as the result of her finding the Savior, she entered on his service, for he said, "Go tell my brethren;" and away she went to tell others that she had found the Savior. If you have the privilege of seeing Christ, do not eat the morsel behind the door. Hast thou found honey? Taste it thyself, but go and tell others. You cannot have seen much of the Savior, unless you desire to let others see him. Your piety is a lucre sham, a flash in the pan, a will-o'-the-wisp, if it does not lead to practical service. Are there not some Mary Magdalenes here who have had seven devils cast out of them? You have felt the power of divine grace in your heart; you love your Savior; you long for communion with him. My dear sister, as soon as you have fellowship, let me charge you, in the Master's name, do not be afraid to speak to others what the Lord shall say in private to you. We do not want women to enter the pulpit, that is a violation both of grace and nature, it is as much an offense to good manners as it is to God's own

law; but you have your own sphere, you have your own place of work, you can gather your own sex about you; there are your children, your servants; you have multitudes of opportunities; but do tell others that Jesus has risen, that there is a risen life; that you know it, and that you pant and long that others too should rise from the grave of sin to the new life in Jesus.

As for you, men and brethren, to whom it pertaineth more particularly to be teachers and pastors, I charge you, whatsoever ye have found within the circle of fire where the closest communion is, whatever you have seen in the deep mines of mystery, whatsoever Christ has revealed to you in hours of retirement when you have come nearest to him, tell it to his family, feed his flock with it, bring forth these things as choice dainties whereon the beloved of the Lord may feast even to the full, "Go, tell my brethren," said Christ, and so say we.

When the two disciples had journeyed to Emmaus, and at the evening meal after the toil of the day's journey was over, were resting themselves; you remember that the mysterious stranger who had so enchanted them with his holy words, took bread, and brake it, and was known to them in the breaking of the bread, but he vanished out of their sight. Well, what happened then? They had constrained him to enter in and abide with them because the day was far spent, but though now much later, their love was a lamp to their feet, yea, wings also, for they forgot the darkness and their despair; their weariness was all gone, and forthwith they began to journey back the threescore furlongs to tell the gladsome news of a risen Lord, who had appeared to them by the way. They reach the body of Christians in Jerusalem, and are received by a burst of joyful news, before they can tell their own tale. Now, brethren, these early Christians were all on fire to speak of Christ's resurrection, and to proclaim what they knew of the Lord. They made common property of their experiences; and so ought we to do. John's account of the sepulcher needs to be supplemented by Peter, and Mary can speak of something further still. Combined, we have a full testimony, and nothing can be spared. Thus we have all peculiar gifts and special manifestations, but the one object God has in view is, the benefit of the whole body of Christ. We must therefore bring our possessions and lay them at the apostles' feet, and make distribution unto all of what God has given to us. Keep back no part of the precious truth, but speak that you do know, and testify what you have seen. Let not the toil, or darkness, or possible unbelief of your hearers weigh one moment in the scale. Up, and be marching to the place of duty, and there tell what great things God has



shown to your soul; and if you hear the sweet words of Christ, I can promise you a holy flame of bright and beaming joy as you speak of the truth to benefit the souls of others.

Finally, if there be any enquirers here, as I hope there are, if you are seeking Jesus this morning, and want to be saved by him and through him, remember, poor enquirer, that Jesus is near you now. There is nothing for you to do, no climbing to heaven, no going down to the depths to bring him up; he is nigh unto you now.

If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, if thou trustest thy soul to him, thou art saved. Jesus is here to every one who will simply give himself up to him to be saved by him. Jesus calls you this morning by your name: he gives you a special invitation to come to him. Listen to that name; respond this morning, — say “Master.” Take Jesus to be your Lord: He deserves it. You are not your own, but you are bought with a price. Give yourself as a blood-bought one up to him. He asks you as he asks Mary, “Woman, why weepest thou?” He asks of each of you who are seeking him, “whom seekest thou?” Do you know what it is you seek? Do you seek some strange feeling? Do you seek signs and wonders, dreams and visions? Seek them no longer. Jesus is what you want; take him and be blest. There, close at your side, is the food your hungry spirit wants: look not up to heaven; look not down to earth—there is in Jesus all you want. Feed on, beloved: faith shall fill your mouth; love shall enjoy the sweet dainty, and your whole body, soul, and spirit shall be sanctified by the divine repast. May God bless you, dear friends, all of you, by giving you like Mary Magdalene to seek the Lord.

# THE WATERER WATERED.

NO. 626

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 23RD, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He that watereth shall be watered also himself.” — Proverbs 11:25.*

THE general principle is, that in living for the good of others, we shall be profited also ourselves. We must not isolate our own interests but feel that we live for others. This teaching is sustained by the analogy of nature, for in nature there is a law that no one thing can be independent of the rest of creation, but there is a mutual action and reaction of all upon all. All the constituent parts of the universe are bound to one another by invisible chains, and there is not a single creature in it which springeth up, or flourisheth, or decayeth for itself alone. The very planets, though they float far from one another, exercise attraction; and the fixed stars, though they seem to be infinitely remote, are still linked to one another by mysterious bonds. God has so constituted this universe, that selfishness is the greatest possible offense against his law, and living for others, and ministering to others, is the strictest obedience to his will. Our surest road to our own happiness is to seek the good of our fellows. We store up in God's own bank what we generously expend on the behalf of our race. The little spring bubbling forth from the ancient pipe on the hill side, overflows the stone basin, and liberally supplies all the villagers with pure and cooling drink. In its flowing it does not waste itself, for the deep fountains in the bowels of the earth continue unceasingly to supply it, and both in winter's frost and summer's drought, the spring-head yields its crystal stream. The little brook which babbles through the wood, hiding among stones, leaping down the moss-grown rocks, and anon deepening and swelling its stream, pours all its gatherings into the river, hoarding not a drop, and though its treasure is constantly being lavished with unstinting liberality, yet heaven and earth see to it that the brook shall never fail to sing its joyous song,

*“Men may come and go  
But I go on for ever.”*

The river hastens with its greater floods towards the all-receiving ocean, pouring itself out every hour with happy plenteousness, as though it only existed to empty itself; yet the abundant tributaries which come streaming from the hills and draining the valleys, are careful that the river shall know no lack, but shall be kept constantly brimming, a joyous and bounding river evermore. The ocean perpetually sends up its steaming exhalations to the sky, grudging nothing, it puts no doors to its roiling waves, but uncovereth all its treasure to the sun, and the sun makes large draughts upon the royal exchequer of the deep; nevertheless the ocean is not diminished, for all the rivers are constantly conspiring to keep the sea full to the shore. The clouds of heaven when they are fall of rain, empty themselves upon the earth, and yet the clouds cease not to be, for “they return after the rain,” and the ocean down below seems but to be too glad to be continually feeding its sister ocean on the other side the firmament. So, as wheels with bands are made to work together, as wheels with cogs working upon one another, the whole watery machinery is kept in motion by each part acting upon its next neighbor, and the next upon the next. Each wheel expends its force upon its fellow, and the whole find a recompense in their mutual action upon one another. The same truth might be illustrated from other departments of nature. If we view this microcosm, the human body, we shall find that the heart does not receive the blood to store it up, but while it pumps it in at one valve, it sends it forth at another. The blood is always circulating everywhere, and is stagnant nowhere; the same is true of all the fluids in a healthy body, they are in a constant state of expenditure. If one cell stores for a few moments its peculiar secretion, it only retains it till it is perfectly fitted for its appointed use in the body, for if any cell in the body should begin to store up its secretion, its store would soon become the cause of inveterate disease; nay, the organ would soon lose the power to secrete at all if it did not give forth its products. The whole of the human system lives by giving. The eye cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee and will not guide thee, for if it does not perform its watchful office, the whole man will be in the ditch, and the eye will be covered with mire. If the members refuse contribute to the general stock, the whole body will become poverty-stricken, and be given up to the bankruptcy of death. Let us learn, then, from the analogy of nature, the great lesson, that to get, we must give; that to accumulate, we must scatter; that to make ourselves happy, we must make others happy; and that to get good and become

spiritually vigorous, we must do good, and seek the spiritual good of others. This is the general principle.

The text suggests a particular personal application of the general principle. We shall consider it, first, in its narrowest sense, as belonging to ourselves personally; secondly, in a wider sense, as it may refer to us as a Church then, thirdly, in its widest sense, as it may be referred to the entire body of Christ, showing that still it is true that as it watereth, so it shall be watered itself.

### **I. First, then, IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES PERSONALLY.**

There are some works, my brethren, in which we cannot all engage. Peculiar men are called to be God's great woodmen, to clear the way with the axe, to go before his army like our sappers and miners-such men as Martin Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingli-that glorious trio of heroes marching in front of reformation and evangelization; they are cutting down the tall trees, tunnelling the hills, and bridging the rivers, and we smaller men feel that there is little of this work for us to do. But when the backwoodsmen have cleared the forest, after all the roots are grubbed, and the soil is burned and ploughed, then comes the sowing and the planting, and in this all the household can take a place; and when the plants have sprung up and need water, it is not only the stalwart man with the axe who can now apply himself to watering, but even the little children can take a share in this lighter work. Watering is work for persons of all grades and all sorts. If I cannot carry about me some ponderous load as the Eastern water-bearer can, yet I will take my little waterpot, my little jug or pitcher, and go to the well; for if I cannot water the forest tree, I may water the tiny plant which grows at its root. Watering is work for all sorts of people; so then we will make a personal application to every Christian here this morning: you can all do something in watering, and this promise can therefore be realized by you all, "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

All God's plants, more or less, want watering. You and I do. We cannot live long without fresh supplies of grace. Hence the value of the promise, "I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment." There are no rills at our root as we grow in the soil of nature; it is only in the garden of grace that we are "like trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth our fruit in our season." If the Lord Jesus who is the stem of the vine should

cease to supply us with the fresh sap of grace, should we not be like the withered branch which is cast over the wall to be burned in the fire?

The Lord's people usually get this watering through instrumentality. God does not speak to us out of heaven with his own voice—perhaps the thunder might appal us; he doth not write texts of Scripture with his own finger in letters of fire across the sky, but he waters us by instrumentality, by his Word written and his Word preached, or otherwise uttered by his servants. His Holy Spirit waters us by the admonitions of parents, by the kind suggestions of friends, by the teaching of his ministers, by the example of all his saints. The Holy Spirit waters us, but he takes care to do it by our fellow-workers, putting an honor upon his own servants by using them in instrumentality.

This being fully believed by us all, we may proceed to another truth, namely, that some of his servants especially want watering, and should therefore be the objects of our constant care. Some plants need watering from their peculiar nature. A gardener will tell you that certain flowers require very little water, perhaps for months they will grow in a stony soil, but others must be watered regularly and plenteously, or they will soon droop. Some of you, my dear brothers and sisters, are so desponding that if you did not receive much comfort you would hardly hold up your heads at all; you are so weak in the faith that if you were not fed with milk continually you would scarcely be alive. “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God” — is especially applicable to the mourners in Zion. Their constitutional temperament is such, that to maintain the lamp of their joy they require much oil of comfort.

Perhaps, too, they are ignorant, and the ignorant want much watering. If they knew the doctrines of grace more fully, they might go to the wells themselves: but not knowing where the water is, or feeling, like the woman at the well, that the well is deep and that there is nothing to do with, they cannot get the water; and we who are instructed in the way of God, must take care that we bring up the water for them with our longer length of the line of knowledge, so that they may not fail to be watered.

It may be, the need is not so much caused by the nature of the plant, by the position in which it is placed. Many of you, dear brethren, are very happily situated, where you can constantly attend the means of grace, where the family altar smokes with sweet perfume, where you cannot well help growing, for you are like plants in a hothouse. But there are others on the

contrary who live in houses where the jeer is far more frequently heard than the voice of praise; where, instead of being helped in your devotions, you are hindered; your spirit is driven to and fro with distractions; from the very closet where you wanted to commune with God, you are forced out by cruel mocking. We ought to be very tender over your condition, as being planted on no fruitful hill, but on a very thirsty land where no water is your position should lead God's people to watch you with deepest interest, and see to it that you are well watered.

I may mention also the sick. When our dear friends are tried with bodily pain, when they are shut up week after week from the public gatherings, then they want watering. Their position is such, that we ought to be specially mindful of them. It is written, "He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young;" and we must note the peculiar condition of the saints of God, being most careful of those who most need our tenderness.

Let me also suggest the young to you. These want watering, both, let me say, from their character and from their position. With little experience and little knowledge, they are prone to wander or to be seized by the wolf. Tend them with parental affection. When slips of flowers are first put into the ground, they want more water than they will do afterwards; when they have sent out more roots, and these roots have abundant fibres searching through the soil for moisture, they may not require much of the gardener's care, but just now they must have it or die; therefore, I say, let the feeble, the weak, the young, the sick, the persecuted, be watered most anxiously and lovingly by you all.

Certain dear friends need watering, not so much from their position and character, as from the present trials through which they are passing. Certain plants after long standing in the sun, droop their leaves and look as if they must wither and die; but as soon as water is poured to their roots, it has sometimes perfectly surprised me to see how they will recover. I could scarcely think that they were the same plants, their recovery was so sudden. The little roots beneath sent the message up to the main roots and said, "We have found out moisture, a friendly hand has given us a supply," and the root talked to the stem, and the stem rejoiced, and the great leaves drank up their share, and the little leaves sucked up their drops, till the whole plant to the very summit was verdant once more and rejoiced. Times will come to all of us when we want water. I, myself, get very desponding

at seasons, and I suppose you do. Unbelief dries us up. Oh that devil of unbelief! Why, if that demon were dead, the other devil we might very well contend with. Personal affliction, losses, crosses, burdens, make us just like the withering shrub, and then we want to have the consolations of some kind friend to water us.

Dear friends, sometimes there are those in the Church who particularly want watering, because they are actually withering. It is not to maintain verdure in their case but to restore it. Those backsliding ones, those who have slipped with their feet, do not cast them off, for God casts not off the backsliding one. When they begin to forsake the House of God, do not forsake them; follow them with your tears. In such a Church as this, if you do not exercise mutual oversight over one another, we shall simply become a mass of corruption, instead of being a mountain of holiness. Watch over your brethren as soon as you see the first signs of declension. When they forsake the prayer-meetings, gently give them a hint of the evil of lukewarmness, and the danger of falling by little and little. When you mark the first sign in their outward carriage of laxity with regard to divine things, when you see coldness where there was formerly zeal, be sure to give a gentle word of earnest, pathetic admonition. As I look around this Tabernacle, I can but compare these rising seats to shelves in the conservatory, and you are the plants which must all be watered, or you will languish and wither; and I, who have to be my Master's under-gardener, am very anxious to say to all of you who have any water in your watering-pots, help me to water these plants, that, by the gracious operations of God the Holy Ghost, they may be kept fruitful, green, verdant in spiritual things even to the end.

We now enter more thoroughly into our text, and observe that all believers have power to water others. You may not have much ability or influence, but you all have some power in this matter, in thinking over what Solomon meant, it struck me that he had in his mind's eye the plan of irrigation which is followed in some Eastern countries. The rivers at certain seasons overflow their banks. The careful husbandmen whose farms are close along the sides of the bank, have large tanks and reservoirs, in which they store up the water. After the flood the river is comparatively empty, and the little farms, the vineyards, and pastures on the banks begin to cry out for water; then the careful husbandman lets out the water from his tank or reservoir by slow degrees, and uses it with great economy. It would sometimes happen that one of these farmers would have his reservoirs filled, and his

next neighbor, perhaps through the bursting of a tank, or the falling down of the bank of earth, might have little or no water. At such times a churlish man would say, "I shall want all my water for myself, I will not lend or give so much as a drop of it. I have none to spare." But the generous man says, "I do not know whether God may be pleased to send a drought or no, but I cannot let my neighbor lose all his crops for the want of a little water while I have a good stock in hand;" so he pulls up the sluice, and lets such a stream as he thinks he can spare flow into his neighbour's channel, that he may water his fields therewith. Now Solomon says that those who water others shall be watered; hence, next season it may happen that this good man may have no water himself; well, then, all the farmers round about will say, "Why, he helped us when his tank was full, and we will return his kindness into his bosom." "Ah," says one, "lie saved me from ruin; I should not have had a crop at all last season if it had not been for him." So they all lend a portion, till he finds no difficulty whatever; even in a season of drought, when men cannot get water for love or money, he is sure to have it. The common feeling of men, as a usual rule, recognises the law of gratitude, and men say, "He watered others, he shall be watered himself." My dear brother, you may be a man of talent, you may be a man of wealth: just turn on the big tap, and let your ignorant or poor neighbors benefit a little by your abundance; pull up the flood-gates, and let the more needy brethren be enriched by your fullness: open that mouth of yours that your wisdom may feed many; tell of what God has done for your soul that the humble may hear thereof and be glad. Do not be a reservoir brimmed up till the banks are ready to burst out through the weight which presses upon them, but just let some of the treasure run out, and when your time of need shall come—and who knows when it may overtake any of us? — you shall find willing friends who shall run with swift feet to cheer your adversity.

This simile needs to be supplemented by another: many true saints are unable to do much. See, then, the gardeners going down to the pond, and dipping in their watering-pots to carry the refreshing liquid to the flowers. A child comes into the garden and wishes to help; and yonder is a little watering-pot for him. Now, see that little water-pot, though it does not carry so much, yet carries the same water; and it does not make any difference to the half-dozen flowers which get that water, whether it came out of the big pot or the little pot, so long as it is the same water, and they get it. You who are like children in God's Church, you who do not know much, yet try and tell to others what you do know, and if it be the same



gospel truth and it be blest by the same Spirit, it will not matter to the souls who get blessed by you whether they were blessed by a man of one or ten talents. What difference will it make to me whether I was converted to God by means of a poor woman who was never made a blessing to anybody else, or by one who had brought his thousands to the Savior's feet? Go, my dear brethren, and exercise the holy art of watering. You say "How?" Why, a word may do it, a look may do it, an action may do it; only zealously desire to offer sympathy, to afford instruction, to give needed help, to impart what you may be favored with to others, and you shall be watering yourselves.

The main point is, that in so watering others we shall be watered ourselves. I am sure we shall, for God promises it and he always keeps his promise. If I want to get water I must give water. Though that seems a strange way of self-serving I pray you try it. Was not that a very singular thing that when the poor woman of Sarepta had nearly exhausted all her meal, the prophet asked for a cake for himself. She had been very saving of it, I dare say she had eaten only a mouthful or two every day. She and her poor boy were looking very thin. They had come to the last handful. She thought, "I will make one cake for my son and myself, and then we will die." She is outside picking up sticks that she may bake this cake. God intends to bless her. How does he do it? There comes his prophet, the hairy man, and the first word he says to her is, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." She is quite ready to serve any one, and away she hastens for the water, when Elijah cries aloud, "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." What, out of that little handful-only enough for one? "Yes," he says, "make me thereof a little cake first, and after make for thee and thy son." "After that!" she might have said, "what will be left after that? When there is only a handful of meal and a little oil in a cruse, not enough for one, am I to give that to you and afterwards see to myself and child?" Faith enabled her to obey, and from that very moment neither she nor her son ever knew what want was. She gave from her little, and her little multiplied. The case of the woman of Zarephath is but one of thousands establishing the rule of God's mode of action with his Church, a rule which shall not be broken till the shall end.

Let me show you how you will get watered yourself. In the first place, if you try to do good to others it will do you good by waking up your powers. Thousands of men do not know what they are made of. You have no idea what a fine fellow you are, young man, till you begin to shake

yourself a little and go forth to fight the Lord's battles. We do not know what sinews we have till we climb the mountains; we do not know what strength there may be in our backs and arms till we have to carry a ponderous load, and then we find it out. You have latent talents, dormant faculties, which would work wonders if you could call them forth. Some people are not awake more than skin deep; all underneath the skin is sound asleep. They are like the great candle which I showed you one night with a small wick, which was only melted a little in the middle while all the outside was still cold, hard tallow, and did not contribute to the light. You have not become warm through yet, your whole souls have not been wound up to the right pitch for serving God, you have only a little earnestness, a little zeal; but if you ventured upon holy enterprises, you would bestir yourself so thoroughly that you would scarcely know yourself again. That would be a blessing indeed.

But next, you would often find that in trying to water others you gained instruction. Go talk to some poor saint to comfort her, and she will tell you what will comfort you. Oh, what gracious lessons some of us have learned at sick beds! We went to teach the Scriptures, we came away blushing that we knew so little of them. We went to talk experimental truth, and we found we were only up to the ankles while here were God's poor saints breast-deep in the river of divine love. We learn by teaching, and our pupils often teach us.

You will also get comfort in your work. Rest assured that working for others is very happy exercise. Lik<sup>9</sup> the two men in the snow; one chafed the other's limbs to keep him from dying, and in so doing, he kept his own blood in circulation, and his own life was preserved. Comfort. God's people and the comfort will return into your own soul.

Watering others will make you humble. You will find better people in the world than yourself. You will be astonished to find how much grace there is where you thought there was none, and how much knowledge some have gained, while you, as yet, have made little progress with far greater opportunities.

You will also win many prayers. Those who work for others, get prayed for, and that is a swift way of growing rich in grace. Let me have your prayers, and I can do anything! Let me be without my people's prayers, and I can do nothing. You Sunday-school teachers, if you are blessed to the conversion of the children, will get your children's prayers. You that

conduct the larger classes, in the conversion of your young people, will be sure to have a wealth of love come back into your own bosoms, swimming upon the stream of supplication. You will thus be a blessing to yourselves.

In watering others you will get honor to yourselves, and that will help to water you by stimulating your future exertions. The Romans appointed censors in their State; not only to censure men for gross immoralities, but to require every man to give an account of what he was doing for the good of the Republic. We have deacons and elders -would it not be an additional blessing to have censors in the Church, to go round and ask the members, all of them, what they are doing for the good of the Christian Church? A Greek historian desired very intensely to say a word about the people of the city where he was born. He felt he could not write his history without saying something of his own native place, and accordingly he wrote this-"While Athens was building temples, and Sparta was waging war, my countrymen were doing nothing." I am afraid there are too many Christians, of whom, if the book were written as to what they are doing in the Church, it would have to be said, they have been doing nothing all their lives. You would be delivered from that reproach if you began to water others.

Let me cease from this subject by saying, while you are watering others, you will be manifesting and showing your love to Christ, and that will make you more like him, and so you will be watered while you are seeking to benefit your neighbors. To serve Jesus! what need I say of that? Look into that face, bedewed with bloody sweat for you, and can you not sweat for him? Look to those hands, pierced for you, and shall your hands hang idly down and not be used for him? Look at those feet, fastened to the wood with nails for you! Can I ask of you any pilgrimage too long to repay the toil which those feet endured for your sake? My brethren and sisters, remember what Christ Jesus has done for you, from whence he came, the riches which he left, to what he came, the poverty and shame which he endured, and how he went down into the depths that he might take us up to the heights. If you will think of these, you will have the best motive, methinks, for beginning to look after his lambs and fighting with those lions which seek to devour his flock; and in that moving motive, will be the main means by which you shall be conformed to his image, and shall become like him, self-sacrificing, doing your Father's business.

I wish I could speak more powerfully this morning, but the matter ought to speak for itself with Christians. If we love Jesus, we shall not want any pleading with, to water his plants. If you really love him, it will not be a question of whether you shall do something, the only question will be, “What can I do?” and you will say in your pew this morning, “What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?” He has spared your lives, he has given you health and strength, provided you with spirituals and temporals, he has made your heart leap for joy at the sound of his name, he has plucked you out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, he has taken you out of the black bondage of the prince of darkness, and made you his sons and daughters; he has put the ring of his eternal love upon your finger, your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

*“This world is yours, and worlds to come,  
Earth is your lodge, and heaven your home.”*

There is a crown for your head and a palm branch for your hand, and pavements of gold for your feet, and felicities for ever for your entire soul; and even your body is to be raised again from the dust and fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for you.” Now what will you do for him? Will on not win the promise that your soul shall be watered by seeking to water the souls of others?

**II.** A BRIEF EXHORTATION shall suffice for the second point-this general principle is worthy of a wider application.

We, as a Church, dear friends, have enjoyed singular prosperity. While many Churches have been depressed and decreased in numbers, we have increased. While other Churches have had the hectic flush of a spurious revival, we have had one perpetual revival, lasting for nearly twelve years. I do not know that we have increased at a more or a less rapid rate; we could not increase more quickly, for we have not officers enough, or time enough to see the converts as it is; we have never, I think, increased less, for the work seems to have ever the same prosperity about it. I praise God that I can say of my ministry in this place and elsewhere, that to this day it hath the dew of its youth upon it, and there are as many rejoicing to find Christ through the agencies employed in this Church to-day as in the first day when we came among you in the freshness and vigor of our youth. We have had no schism; we have had no division; we have not been vexed with

heresy. We have been blessed with something like persecution, but this has only bound us the faster to one another, till we are like a three-fold cord which cannot be broken, and like iron bars made red hot in the furnace and hammered together, we are not soon to be sundered from one another. Now, dear friends, up to this time the policy which we have pursued has been this: if members of other Churches want to know, we hereby tell them, we have endeavored to water others. Your minister has journeyed all over the three kingdoms preaching the Word, and you have not grumbled at his absence. We have undertaken many enterprises for Christ; we hope to undertake a great many more. We have never husbanded our strength; we have undertaken enterprises that were enough to exhaust us, to which we became accustomed in due season, and then we have gone on to something more. We have never sought to hinder the uprising of other Churches from our midst or in our neighborhood. It is with cheerfulness that we dismiss our twelves, our twenties, our fifties, to form other Churches. We encourage our members to leave us to found other Churches; nay, we seek to persuade them to do it. We ask them to scatter throughout the land to become the goodly seed which God shall bless. I believe that so long as we do this, we shall prosper. I have marked other Churches that have adopted the other way, and they have not succeeded. This is what I have heard from some ministers: "I do not encourage village stations or, if I do, I do not encourage their becoming distinct Churches and breaking bread together I do not encourage too many young men going out to preach, for to have a knot of people who can preach a little, may very soon cause dissatisfaction with my own preaching" I have marked those who have followed this course, and I have seen that the effect of trying to keep all the blood in the heart is to bring on congestion, and very soon the whole body has been out of health. My brethren, if you can do more good elsewhere than you can do here, for God's sake, go, and happy shalt I be that you have gone. If you can serve my Master in the little rooms in the neighborhood, if by forming yourselves into smaller Churches you can increase the honor of my Master's name, I shall love you none the less for going, but I shall delight to think that you have Christ's spirit in you, and can do and dare for his name's sake. At the present moment, we rejoice to know that many a Sunday School in this neighborhood is indebted to the members of this Church for teachers. It is right. We do not want you at home, and are therefore glad to see you at work else. where. No matter, so long as Christ is preached, whether you throw your strength into that Church or into this Church. Here, as being members with us, we

have the first claim upon you; but when we do not need you by reason of our abundance of men, go and give your strength to any other part of Christ's Church that may desire you.

While I speak thus much in your praise, my brethren and sisters, let me say, we must keep this up. If we say, "We have the College to support, and we do as much as other Churches for various societies, and we can be content to sit still," this Church will begin to go rotten at the core the moment we are not working for God with might and main. Sometimes I get a pull at my coat-tail by very kind, judicious friends, who think I shall ask you to do too much. My brethren are welcome to pull my coat-tail, but it will come off before I shall stand back for a moment. As long as I live I must serve my Master with my whole soul, and when you think I go too fast, you can stand back if you dare, for mark, you will be responsible to God if you do; you may start back if you will, and if you dare, but I must go on, must go, **MUST** go on, or else you and I that are worthy of the day in which you live will follow me, step by step, in any good project, and though I should seem too rash, you will redeem me from the charge of rashness by the enthusiasm, and the earnestness with which you carry out my plans. Here is this great city! Was there ever such spiritual destitution? A million of people who could not go to a place of worship, if they had the heart to go there! And here we have the priestcraft of the Church of England increasing the spiritual destitution by building fresh Churches-not providing for it, but increasing it I say, for I reckon that wherever Puseyism is preached, there is an increase of spiritual destitution; wherever broad Churchism comes, there is an increase of spiritual destitution, and it is little better where they go who preach the gospel in the pulpit, and read Popery at the font, the grave, and the bedside. In this last case public morality is shocked by the perjury of those who swear to a Prayer Book in which they do not believe. Much as I respect and even love believers in the Anglican Establishment, I can only feel that their presence in so corrupt a body is the reason why it exists; and I therefore think them to be doing mischief by buttressing a falling and ruinous cause. True Protestants, we must take upon ourselves to work for London, as if there were no other agencies at work except those of the Free Churches; for the Hagar Church, the Church which has a mortal for its head, the harlot Church which lives in alliance with the State, has too many sins of her own to repent of, to be of much use in this hour of peril. The good she can do is so insignificant, that it is not worth while to compute it, because the monstrous evil which she

fosters and perpetrates is a more than sufficient set-off against it. We must work and toil, and labor to scatter in every lane, amid alley, and court of London, the pure gospel of the blessed God; and let men know that Sacramentarianism is a lie, and that there is no salvation but in the uplifted cross of Christ, and no salvation through ceremonies but only through a simple faith in him who loved us and gave himself for us. If ye among others are come to the kingdom for such a time as this, it shall be well with you; but if not, ye shall be put away as things abhorred, and this place shall be a hissing and a bye-word in generations yet to come, and it shall be said of you, there lived a people who were led by a man, who, with all his faults, was in earnest and was honest, and they would not follow him, but proved unworthy of him, and they have passed away, and their names are writ in water. They had opportunities which they did not use; work was allotted them which they were not worthy to take up, God said to them in answer to their request to be excused, “Ye shall be excused;” and they went back

*“To the vile dust from whence they sprung,  
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.”*

But it shall not be so with you, my brethren; though I thus speak, I know your zeal, and love, and earnestness, and that you will continue to water others, and then you shall be watered yourselves. We will pray and strive together for the faith once delivered to the saints; we will cleave closer and closer to one another, and, foot to foot, and shoulder to shoulder, we will march to battle for God and for his truth, and come what may, whoever may prove cravens in these days of charity and compromise, we will be found, in God’s name, by the help of God’s Spirit, faithful and true.

**III.** And now, dear friends, another sentence or two will close the sermon. On the widest scale, this is true. This is true of our denomination, and of every Church. If we will water others, we shall be watered. From the very day when Carey, and Fuller, and Pearce went forth to send the gospel to the heathen, a blessing rested upon our denomination, I believe, and if we had done more for the heathen, we should have been stronger to do more at home. You may rest assured, though some may not think it, that our missionary operations are an infinite blessing to the churches at home,—that relinquishing them, giving them up, staying them, would bring such a blight and a curse that we had need to go down on our knees and pray,

God send the missionary work back again. Give us an outlet for our liberality and our zeal, for without it we become like a pool dammed up, that is full of filth, and toads, and frogs, and all sorts of foul things. Lord, open the river for our zeal and let us once again have an opportunity to serve thee for the nations that are far away!" But I must leave you to preach on that point for my time has gone, and you can do so more practically than I can. My sermon is reported, and I will undertake that what you preach shall not be forgotten, it shall all be taken down in those boxes which shall be passed round. Say each of you as much as ever you can upon this subject, by your contributions, and remember, "He that watereth others, shall himself be watered."



# JUSTIFICATION AND GLORY.

NO. 627

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 30TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Whom he justified, them he also glorified.”-Romans 8:30.*

WELL said the apostle in another place, “All things are of God;” for here in this passage all works of grace are evidently so. The pronoun “he” is repeated yet again and again, as if to set the Lord always before us. “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” “Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” It is of God all the way through. There is not an inch of ground left to be covered by the creature’s foot. The eternal Creator worketh all things in the covenant of grace, according to the counsel of his own will. Haldane has an admirable note on this passage, which we will quote in full. “In looking back on this passage, we should observe, that in all that is stated, man acts no part, but is passive, and all is done by God. He is elected, and predestinated, and called, and justified, and glorified by God. The apostle was here concluding all that he had said before, in enumerating topics of consolation to believers; and is now going on to show that God is “for us,” or on the part of his people. Could anything, then, be more consolatory to those who love God, than to be in this manner assured that the great concern of their salvation is not left in their own keeping? God, even their covenant God, hath taken the whole upon himself. He hath undertaken for them. There is no room, then, for chance or change, he will perfect that which concerneth them.” Does not this account for the majestic manner in which these covenant mercies follow one another as in a triumphal procession. Foreknowledge leads the van with eyes beaming with love, then come predestination, calling, justification, glorification, all in their proper order. Not one of these gigantic mercies limps along the road, but marching with

stately tread, adorned in robes of glory, each one keeping its place, they make up a magnificent procession to the praise of the glory of his grace, who has set them all in order, and written his own name upon them all. Observe, there is no “if,” no “but,” no “may be,” no “peradventure” here. He foreknows, he predestinates. No creature lifts up its puny voice to object to the predestinating decree. Having predestinated, he calls, and it is such an effectual calling, that we hear of no resistance. Having called, he justifies, and “who is he that condemneth?” Having justified without let or hindrance, he achieves his eternal purpose without impediment, and brings forth the top-stone of the temple of his grace with shoutings, as it is written, “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Let our souls be glad, as we clearly see the mighty presence of our God in every work of grace, and let us understand whence the force, the certainty, the immutability, the majesty of the whole matter comes; namely, from the fact that “he ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will;” and “who shall stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?”

This morning, God the Holy Ghost, I trust, will make it to Your profit to weigh these two precious gems of lovingkindness, to count over these priceless treasures of mercy, to swim in these two seas of love, justification and glorification; and then we shall need time carefully to search after the connection between them both, for they are rivetted together by rivets of diamond; they are fastened together so fast and firmly, that neither death nor hell can separate them. “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

**I.** Let us begin, then, by considering WHAT IT IS TO BE JUSTIFIED.

If you wish for an answer in a few words, ask your children who have learned our catechism, and you have it: “Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.” Perhaps, however, I had better unfold the truth in detail. You will perceive by reading the connection and by a moment’s reflection, that the justification here meant is an act of God passed upon a person needing it, consequently passed upon a person who could not justify himself; a person naturally guilty of sin, being in a state of condemnation naturally, and needing to be lifted out of it by an act of justification of a divine order. It is not possible that God should have devised a plan of justification for those who were already justified by their own actions. We do not talk with any wonder, or speak with any astonishment of a

justification which a man achieves for himself. The guiltless need no justification; they have it already. If any man hath kept the law of God and made it honorable he is in himself just, and needs not to be made just—he is so already. Justification is an act of grace passed upon a sinner, upon one who has transgressed the law and cannot be justified by it, and who, therefore, needs to be made just in another way, a way out of his own reach, above his own doings, and coming, as in the text, from God himself; for it says, “He justifies.” This, though it is a very common-place observation, is a very sweet truth to begin with. Oh, sinner! however black thy sins may have been, thou mayest yet be justified. Though thy sins be as scarlet, they may yet be as wool; and though thou be red like crimson thou mayest be white as snow. It is written that “he justifieth the ungodly,” yes, the ungodly, such as thou hast been. Christ came not into the world as a physician for those who are whole, but for those who are sick. Justification is an act of grace which looks out for a sinner upon whom to exercise itself. May the eyes of grace find thee out this morning, poor transgressor, and make thee just.

In the next place, justification is the result of sovereign grace, and of sovereign grace alone. We are told that “by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified.” And yet again, “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. “I cannot earn justification. Nothing which I can ever do can merit justification at the hands of God. I have so offended that all which is due to me is God’s wrath and that for ever. If I shall ever be accounted just it must be because God wills to make me just; it must be, because out of his divine compassion, and for no other reason whatever, he looks upon me in my sin and misery, lifts me up from the dunghill of my ruin, and determines to wrap me about with the royal apparel of a righteousness which he has prepared. There is no justification then, as an act of merit; the day for that was past when Adam fell, and when we fell in him. Justification now comes as a priceless boon from the liberal hand of God’s grace.

Justification has for its matter and means the righteousness of Jesus Christ, set forth in his vicarious obedience, both in life and death. Certain modern heretics, who ought to have known better, have denied this, and there were some in older times who, by reason of ignorance, said that there was no such thing as the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. He who denies this, perhaps unconsciously, cuts at the root of the gospel system. I believe that this doctrine is involved in the whole system of substitution and

satisfaction; and we all know that substitution and a vicarious sacrifice are the very marrow of the gospel of Christ. The law, like the God from whom it came, is absolutely immutable, and can be satisfied by nothing else than a complete and perfect righteousness, at once suffering the penalty for guilt incurred already, and working out obedience to the precept which still binds those upon whom penalty has passed. This was rendered by the Lord Jesus as the representative of his chosen, and is the sole legal ground for the justification of the elect. As for me, I can never doubt that Christ's righteousness is mine, when I find that Christ himself and all that he has belongs to me; if I find that he gives me everything, surely he gives me his righteousness among the rest. And what am I to do with that if not to wear it? Am I to lay it by in a wardrobe and not put it on? Well, sirs, let others wear what they will; my soul rejoices in the royal apparel. For me, the term "the Lord our righteousness" is significant and has a weight of meaning. Jesus Christ shall be my righteousness so long as I read the language of the apostle, "he is made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." My dear brethren, do not doubt the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, whatever cavillers may say. Remember that you must have a righteousness. It is this which the law requires. I do not read that the law made with our first parents required suffering; it did demand it as a penalty after its breach; but the righteousness of the law required not suffering, but obedience. Suffering would not release us from the duty of obeying. Lost souls in hell are still under the law, and their woes and pangs if completely endured would never justify them. Obedience, and obedience alone, can justify, and where can we have it but in Jesus our Substitute? Christ comes to magnify the law: how does he do it but by obedience? If I am to enter into life by the keeping of the commandments, as the Lord tells me in the nineteenth chapter of Matthew, and the seventeenth verse, how can I except by Christ having kept them? and how can he have kept the law except by obedience to its commands? The promises in the Word of God are not made to suffering; they are made to obedience: consequently Christ's sufferings, though they may remove the penalty, do not alone make me the inheritor of the promise. "If thou wilt enter into life," said Christ, "keep the commandments." It is only Christ's keeping the commandments that entitles me to enter life. "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable." I do not enter into life by virtue of his sufferings-those deliver me from death, those purge me from filthiness, but, entering the enjoyments of the life eternal must he the

result of obedience; and as it cannot be the result of mine, it is the result of his which is imputed to me. We find the apostle Paul putting Christ's obedience in contrast to the disobedience of Adam: "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Now this is not Christ's death merely, but Christ's active obedience, which is here meant, and it is by this that we are made righteous. Beloved, you need not sing with stammering tongues that blessed verse of our hymn,

*"Jesus, thy perfect righteousness,  
My beauty is, my glorious dress."*

For despite all the outcry of modern times against that doctrine, it is written in heaven and is a sure and precious truth to be received by all the faithful, that we are justified by faith through the righteousness of Christ Jesus imputed to us. See what Christ has done in his living and in his dying, his acts becoming our acts and his righteousness being imputed to us, so that we are rewarded as if we were righteous, while he was punished as though he had been guilty.

This justification then comes to sinners as an act of pure grace, the foundation of it being Christ's righteousness. The practical way of its application is by faith. The sinner believeth God, and believeth that Christ is sent of God, and takes Christ Jesus to be his only confidence and trust, and by that act he becomes a justified soul. It is not by repenting that we are justified, but by believing; it is not by deep experience of the guilt of sin; it is not by bitter pangs and throes under the temptations of Satan; it is not by mortification of the body, nor by the renunciation of self; all these are good, but the act which justifieth is a look at Christ. We, having nothing being nothing boasting of nothing, but being utterly emptied, do look to him whose wounds stream with the life-giving blood, and as we look to him, we live and are justified by his life. There is life in a look at the crucified One, and life in the sense of justification. He who a minute before was in himself a condemned criminal fit only to be taken to the place from whence he came and to suffer divine wrath, is at once, by an act of faith made an heir of God, joint heir with Jesus Christ, taken from the place of condemnation and put into the place of acceptance, so that now he dreads no more the wrath of God; the curse of God cannot touch him, for Christ was made a curse for him, as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

Now concerning this great mercy of justification let us say that it is instantaneous. Sanctification needs a whole life, justification is the work of a second, perhaps it needs no appreciable time. The sinner looks to Christ, it is all done, his sin is gone in a moment. The righteousness of Christ is, as in an instant, imputed to the believing sinner. Sanctification, moreover, progresses or declines; it is a thing of changes; the work of the Holy Spirit sometimes ripens swiftly, and at other times, by reason of temptation or trial within, it is but slow in its advance; but justification is complete in a moment. The dying thief was as clean one moment after he had trusted in Christ as he was when he was with Christ in Paradise. Justification in heaven is not more complete than it is on earth. Nay, listen to me, child of God. When thy soul seems to be a very pandemonium through the blasphemies of Satan, when thy doubts and fears leap upon thee like so many lions, when thy sins prevail against thee so that thou canst not look up, yet, if thou be a believer thou art even then, in thy worst moments, as completely and perfectly justified as in those happy days when on Tabor's summit thou wert apt to say, "Let us build three tabernacles, and here abide." Justification never alters in a child of God. God pronounces him guiltless, and guiltless he is. Jehovah justifies him, and neither his holiness can improve his righteousness, nor his sins diminish it. He stands in Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, as accepted one moment as at another moment, as sure of eternal life at one instant as at another. Oh, how blessed is this truth: justified in a moment, and justified completely!

And observe, my dear brethren, that he who is thus justified is justified infallibly. There is no mistake concerning the transaction. "It is God that justifieth;" where, then, can there be a mistake? If I justify myself, I am a tool, and I make God a liar; but if God justifies me, who is he that condemneth? I, a poor sinner, black as night, fly to the shelter of the great shield stained with blood which God holds over my head, and there I stand at all times; and though I know that every lightning of justice might well dart its force upon me, as I am in myself, yet as I see my shield, the Lord's Anointed, I am not afraid; but, standing under that shield, I defy heaven, and earth, and hell; crying in the language of Paul, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" There is a prisoner at the bar, and the jury have just brought in a verdict of "Not guilty." The judge bids him go free. There are people in the court who gnash their teeth at him; there are persons in the street who hate him; what cares he? "I have been pronounced 'not guilty' by the

proper tribunal; the Judge himself tells me that I am acquitted; not a law-officer can touch me; not the fiercest enemy in the world can drag me into court again; I have been tried, and found 'not guilty;' and who is he that condemneth?" It is just so with the Christian. Christ's righteousness is put upon him, Christ takes his sins, and when he stands before God's bar, the eternal voice seems to say, "I see no sin in that man." How can he? All that mans s sins Christ took away. The eternal voice sounds forth again, "I can see righteousness there;" and well it may see it, for Christ's righteousness is there, and therefore the man is infallibly, upon grounds of justice which are not disputable; infallibly, upon grounds which he himself may realize as being certain, justified through Christ Jesus.

Do remember, dear brethren, and I will not occupy you much longer over a theme where we might be tempted to stay, that this justification is irreversible. Once justified you shall never be condemned. Jehovah never plays fast and loose with men. He does not look upon a sinner and say, "I forgive thee," and then afterwards say, "Depart ye cursed." Arminians may think so, but the God of believers will not do so. The God of Christians says, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Having taken the prodigal into the house and put the ring on his finger and the shoes on his feet, he never turns that prodigal out of doors. Being married to his people he never sues out a divorce, for the Lord the God of Israel saith he hateth putting away. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquities for my name's sake, and will not remember them against thee any more for ever." "I have cast thine iniquities into the depths of the sea." Pardon and justification are irreversible, and consequently the blessings which justification brings to us, belong to us by an entail that can never be broken for ever and ever. If I am justified, then I have peace with God, and that peace shall be like a river, never dried up, because my righteousness is like the waves of the sea, never exhausted. If I am justified I can claim Jehovah's protection; and I shall have it, for he will not suffer the just man to perish. If I am justified I may come before God and ask for heaven as my right, as a reward of righteousness imputed to me, and I shall have it, for he will never deny to a justified person the fullness of joy which is at his right hand for evermore. Oh, what a blessing to be justified!

Once more, before I leave this point, I must ask you to be kind enough to question yourselves as to whether you have been justified. "Well," says one, "perhaps I have been, and do not know it." My dear friend, I do not

think so. The work of justification is generally attended with such a flood of joy, that I think you must know it. Bunyan's pilgrim did not lose the burden off his back, and not know it; but as soon as it was gone, he gave three great leaps for joy, and went on his way singing. You may have doubts about whether you are justified; I hope you will not be easy under them, but will seek after an assured interest in Christ. My dear brother, if thou hast any doubt, go to Christ again. If thou art not justified, go to him to be justified; just as you are, with nothing but the plea of his blood in your mouth, go to him, for he casts out none that come unto God by him. Do still know that the act of faith justifies, and be not thou afraid to exercise that act of faith, notwithstanding all thy shortcomings and thy sins. "Hear me, Jesus! If I never was a saint, I am a sinner, and thou didst come to save sinners, and I cast myself on thee. Thy promise is, that thou wilt cast out none that come. Oh, cast me not out; even me do thou receive and accept for thy love's sake."

## II. Thus much upon justification. And now a little upon GLORY.

How that golden word has been debased in the coinage of human speech. It has come to mean the glitter of war's helmet, and the noise of the crowd's hurrahs. Smollet called it "the fair child of peril." Johnson wrote—"Glory, the casual gift of thoughtless crowds, "Glory, the bride of avaricious virtue!"

It is a far other and higher glory of which we speak to-day. As high as the heaven is above the earth is God's glory from all the poor stuff which mortals dignify with that fair name.

"Whom he justified, them he also glorified." They follow close together you see. A little stream divides them, but the apostle says nothing about it, and you and I need not say much. It is a narrow stream called Death: there is no glory without passing through that, or through the great change when the Lord comes; but there is nothing said about it, and so we will not say anything. It is not worth thinking of, it is swallowed up in victory. It may be an enemy, but it is an enemy that is to be destroyed. Now, while speaking of glory, I think I must divide the glory which God gives to the justified into three parts. There is, first of all, the glory which disembodied spirits are enjoying even now; there is, secondly, the resurrection glory, which they will enjoy when the soul and body shall be re-united, and when, through the millennium, they shall be "for ever with the Lord;" and then there is "the eternal weight of glory," which is to be revealed both in body



and soul, in the never-ending state of bliss which God has prepared for his people.

Let us raise our thoughts a little while to the state of disembodied spirits. The moment that the soul leaves the body, the believing soul, the justified soul is in glory. We know that there is no preparatory process for it to pass through. Romanism holds that some of the best saints go to heaven when they die; but that the great mass of inferior saints are not qualified for heaven and must undergo a purgation for a series of years till they are prepared to enter glory; that the saints who died under the Old Testament, or at least the most of them, went to the limbus patrum, which some wicked Protestants call limbo, where they remained without the beatific vision until the Lord Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison, and led them up afterwards to heaven with him. As for the grossly wicked who have by mortal sin lost the grace of baptism, they go to hell at once; but the better sort of partially sanctified Christians must suffer more or less intensely till their sins are atoned for, and purged away. It was well said by Hugh Latimer, that the key of purgatory hangs in the pope's larder, for, said he, it had helped to keep it pretty full, and I have no doubt it has. It has been a very profitable invention; more money has been paid, I suppose, for getting souls out of purgatory than people have been tempted to pay in order to keep them out of hell. However, we are not deceived in this matter, let the Council of Trent say what it may. The case of the dying thief is to the point. He was no eminent saint. He had not for many years performed works of supererogation by which he reached perfection, and could claim that the gates should be opened to him. He was a sinner up to the very last moment, and the only good deed that we ever read of his doing, was, when he claimed Christ as Lord, and rebuked his fellow-thief for slandering the Savior. Yet, hear the words:—"To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Nor is this the only instance. We find, when Lazarus died, according to the parable, that he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, a place of unspeakable rest and delight which the rich man greatly envied. Stephen expected the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit, and the apostle. Paul was in a strait betwixt two, being willing "to depart and to be with Christ." He evidently did not anticipate any delay between earth and heaven, for he says, "knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." He puts the two as an alternative. We are not in trouble about them that sleep; we know that they sleep in Jesus, and that he will bring

them with him. In Ephesians 3:15, the apostle mentions the whole family as being in heaven and earth, but he speaks of none of the Lord's people being in limbo. Those whom we are bidden to follow, in Hebrews 6:12, are now inheriting the promises. Let the voice of God decide the case for ever. Rev 14:13. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do. follow them."

Perhaps that word "Paradise" which Christ uses to describe the state of disembodied spirits may be a help to us in judging of the condition of the blessed. Paradise was a place of perfect peace, of sinlessness, of rest, of enjoyment, and freedom from evil. Eden! oh, how shall we talk of its glories long since faded? Let us, however, remember its winding walks among trees loaded with luscious fruits. Let us remember the glory of its rising and its setting sun; the immortality, the peace, the joy, the love, the brightness which our first parents enjoyed in their naked innocence.

That happy garden is a faint picture of the naked spirits, unclothed with bodies, who are now before the eternal throne; they have no pain, nor weariness, no evil, nor fear of death. They possess everything that can make them blessed, except the resurrection body.

*"There fruits that never fade,  
On trees immortal grow;  
There, rocks, and hills, and floods, and vales,  
With milk and honey flow."*

Methinks, Dr. Watts was right when he said-

*"There everlasting spring abides,  
And never-withering flowers."*

They are in a blessed state of tranquillity and perfection; but the Savior added, what was the beauty of all, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The glory of paradise was, that God walked there in the cool of the evening with his creatures; and the glory of heaven is, that "they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light," and the days of their mourning shall be ended. God wipes away all tears from their eyes, and the Lamb leads them to the living fountains of waters. God is with them to be their God, and they are with him to be his happy people.

at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore. This is the state of disembodied spirits now.

If I read the word aright, and it is honest to admit that there is much room for difference of opinion here, the day will come, when the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God. Some think that this descent of the Lord will be post-millennial-that is, after the thousand years of his reign. I cannot think so. I conceive that the advent will be pre-millennial; that he will come first; and then will come the millennium as the result of his personal reign upon earth. But whether or no, this much is the fact, that Christ will suddenly come, come to reign, and come to judge the earth in righteousness. Now, at that time those of us who are alive and remain, shall have no preference over them that sleep. It is true "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Christ will bring with him those who sleep in him. They are now in that state which is called sleep; that is, a state of hallowed rest, tranquillity, and enjoyment: but they shall come with him. Lo, he comes with ten thousand times ten thousand of his saints. Then, from beds of dust and silent clay their bodies shall wake up; the very bodies that were put into the tomb shall rise instinct with life. I say the very bodies; and it is not necessary to that, that there should be the very same particles of matter. My body is the same body that it was ten years ago; yet I am told, and I believe it, that there is not a particle of matter in my body now that was in it ten years ago; and yet its identity is not disturbed thereby. Protect the germ, as God doubtless will, the life-germ of the seed corn which you sow in the earth- protect that, and you have protected identity; and though when we rise it will not be as flesh and blood, "for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption;" yet it shall be the same body, for all bodies are not the same bodies, for there are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial; and the glory is not the same; for there is the glory of the sun, the glory of the moon, and of the stars. So I may have the same body, the same for identity, and yet as to its constituent elements, and especially as to its qualities of weakness, mortality and corruption, it may be as distinct and changed as light is distinct and changed from darkness.

Oh, my brethren, let this be an assured truth to us that we do not put the body into the grave to lose it. Watts is right when he says,

*“Corruption, earth and worms  
Do but refine this flesh.”*

We put the body there as the chemist puts gold into the furnace; it shall come out the same as to its gold, but the dross shall be left behind. All that was precious in the fabric shall remain; that which was corruptible, defiled, sinful, shall have passed away.

According to our belief the soul will then return to the body. There will be a joyful meeting. Soul and body often quarrel here; but they are always loath to part, which proves how true is the wedlock between them: but what a happy meeting it will be, when there will be no more jars between this husband and wife, when the soul and body shall be merged together in the perfection of union. Then, whatever may be the splendor of Christ will be the splendor of his people. Our bodies shall be like unto his glorious body, and we ourselves shall be like him.

*“It doth not yet appear  
How great we must be made;  
But when we see our Savior here,  
We shall be like our Head.”*

Will he reign? We shall reign with him. Will he judge the earth? “Know ye not that ye shall judge angels.” “The saints shall judge the world.” Will he be ruler over cities? He will make us ruler over many cities. All the splendor and triumph, and victory and shouting, we shall have a share in; and when the grand Hallel! shall go up from earth, and land, and sea, and from the depths that are under the earth, our tongue shall swell the tremendous chorus, and our ear shall be a partaker of the ever-blessed harmony. Let us not fear. “Whom he justified, them he also glorified;” both in the sense of giving their disembodied spirits joy, and giving the soul and body power to reign with him.

Well, and what then? Then cometh the end; when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when the mediatorial dispensation shall be finished, what then? Will the earth be renovated and fitted up anew as a new heaven and a new earth? Will that new Jerusalem that is to come down at the coming of Christ, be the future abode of saints? We do not know, and we do not care one whit. This much we know, that we shall be for ever with the Lord. With Christ shall be the heaven of believers for ever, according to the Lord’s own prayer, “Father, I will that they also

whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.”

If I might very hastily divide this glory into its constituent elements, I think I should say it means perfect rest. “There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God;” life in its fullest sense; life with emphasis; eternal life; nearness to God; closeness to the Divine heart; a sense of his love shed abroad in all its fullness; likeness to Christ; fullness of communion with him; abundance of the Spirit of God, being filled with all the fullness of God; an excess of joy; a perpetual influx of delight; perfection of holiness; no stain nor thought of sin; perfect submission to the divine will; a delight and acquiescence in, and conformity to that will; absorption as it were into God, the creature still the creature, but filled with the Creator to the brim; serenity caused by a sense of safety; continuance of heavenly service; an intense satisfaction in serving God day and night; bliss in the society of perfect spirits and glorified angels; delight in the retrospect of the past, delight in the enjoyment of the present, and in the prospect of the future; something ever new and evermore the same; a delightful variety of satisfaction, and a heavenly sameness of delight; clear knowledge; absence of all clouds; ripeness of understanding; excellence of judgment; and, above all, an intense vigor of heart, and the whole of that heart set upon Him whom our eye shall see to be altogether lovely!

I have looked at the crests of a few of the waves as I see them breaking over the sea of immortality, I have tried to give you the names of a few of the peaks of the long alpine range of glory. But, ah! where are my words, and where are my thoughts? “Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” Our only satisfaction in thinking of it is, that “he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” May his Spirit dwell in you, and give you foretastes of the rest which remaineth; antepasts of the eternal banquet, where Christ will drink the wine new with us in his heavenly Father’s kingdom.

### **III. Briefly on the last point-THE BOND OF INTIMATE CONNECTION BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND GLORY.**

“Whom he justified, them he glorified.” Let me show you why it must be: in the first place, a justified person has in him the bud of glory. What is glory? It is a state of perfect peace: “Therefore, being justified, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” What is glory? It is a state of rest: “We, which have believed, do enter into rest.” What is glory? It is a

state of safety. When sin is pardoned I am secure. I am safe-safe now, through being justified. What is heaven? It is a place of nearness to God; but he hath made us nigh by the blood of his Son having justified us. What is heaven? It is communion with Christ: But, beloved, we have already boldness and access with boldness unto our Lord Jesus, seeing he hath made us accepted in himself. If you will but look carefully into justification you may see heaven hidden within it. They tell us that inside the acorn there is the whole oak, with all its branches and roots. And, certainly, within justification, there is heaven, with all its light, and life, and love, and joy, perpetual serenity and security. If you are justified, my dear brother, you are already in a sense glorified. You notice how the text puts it. It does not say, "Whom he justified, them he will glorify," but "them he also glorified," as if the thing came at the same time. Certainly it does in embryo, in the germ, in the essence of the thing. He that is justified, is in a certain sense glorified, for "he hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." Even this day, the life that we live is "not I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." Heaven is begun, glory is begun below.

Note again, justification is a claim to glorification. I speak with great reverence here, and caution, I hope; but it does not strike me that it could be consistent with the justice of God, to deny eternal glory to a justified person. Certainly, justification has its rights. I am now speaking forensically, using forensic or legal terms. Justification is a legal term, signifying that the person is right in the eye of the law. Now, he that is right in the eye of the law, has a claim to the protection and smile of the law; and if I have a righteousness to which a promise is appended, I have a right to the promise appended to the righteousness which I possess. The promise is, "He that doeth these things, shall live by them;" and I claim to live by them; I claim to live by virtue of what Christ has done for me. I come before God with his Son's righteousness in my hands; and I claim as a matter of justice to his own dear Son, that he should give to me what his Son has merited, because the merits of his dear Son have been by him willed over in his dying breath to me. Oh, Christian, God cannot condemn thee, unless he should cease to be just. He will not, for he cannot cease to be gracious.

Justification would be but a very sorry gift of God, if it did not involve glory. Oh, to be justified, and then cast into hell! Brethren, can you suppose such a thing? If you can so pervert your imaginations, and make

your judgments play the acrobat as to conceive a justified soul damned, then I ask you what greater curse could the infernal fiend himself confer upon a mortal than this so-called justification. A spirit pronounced just, and then sent down to hell, accursed of God, accursed by the same lips that justified it,—blasphemous thought! To lie in those flames, and to remember that I once had the righteousness of Christ, that I once was washed in his precious blood—oh, impossible! It shall not, must not, cannot be, while the Deity is immutable, and while the strong hand of God will not suffer the righteousness of Christ thus to be covered with disgrace. He did not begin to build, and then fail to finish. “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Where a man has done the greater, he does not fail to do the less. Now, it is a greater thing to justify a man than it is to glorify him. I mean this—that justification cost the Savior’s life, and the Savior’s death; but to glorify a man who is already justified costs God nothing. The expense is already laid out in the justification of the soul; and to take a man to heaven is only to take him to a prepared place, for which he is himself prepared. Shall he do the greater, and then neglect the less. “He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.”

The only question is, am I justified? I would say in closing, do not let that be a question, dear hearer. But look thou to him who freely justifies every believing soul, and trust thyself now in his hand. May the Spirit of God bring thee graciously to do it, and thou shalt find it true, “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

“A Catechism with Proofs”, compiled by C. H. Spurgeon from the Assembly’s Shorter Catechism, and the Baptist Catechism. London: Passmore & Alabaster, 23, Paternoster Row. Price J d.; 7s. per hundred.

# A GLORIOUS CHURCH.

NO. 628

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 7TH, 1835**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”-  
Ephesians 5:25-27.

WHAT a golden example Christ gives to his disciples! There are few masters who could venture to say, “If YOU would practice my teaching, imitate my life.” But the life of Jesus is the exact transcript of perfect virtue, and therefore he can point to himself as the paragon of holiness, as well as the teacher of it. The Christian should take nothing short of Christ for his model. Under no circumstances ought we to be content unless we reflect the grace which was in Christ Jesus. Even as a husband, which is a relationship that the Christian sustains in common with the rest of men, he is to look upon Christ Jesus as being set before him as the picture, and he is to paint according to that copy. Christ himself being the bridegroom of the Church, the true Christian is to seek to be such a husband as Christ was to his spouse. I fear, brethren, that we often stop short of the Master’s example; that we compare ourselves among ourselves, and are therefore far from being wise. We think if we avoid the egregious faults of some, and can attain to the moderate virtues of others, we have done well. Let it be so no longer. He would never excel in statuary who should take the works of some mere tyro to be his copy. No; the sculptor knows that he cannot rival Praxiteles or Phidias, and yet he takes some Greek torso, or bust from the antique to be his model: he must have perfection there, if there he none in his own workmanship. The painter would never attain to eminence if he



went to an exhibition and devoted himself to the study of some work of moderate worth, and said; "I will attempt to reach this, and there I will stop contented." No, he goes to the galleries of the great masters, and though his timid pencil may not dare to hope that he shall strike out thoughts so clearly and make life stand out upon the canvas as they have done, yet he seeks to drink in their inspiration, hoping that he may rise to some proud eminence in art by imitating them. Let the Christian then aspire to be like unto his Lord, who is the author and finisher of his faith; and let him, as he runs the heavenly race, look unto Jesus, and make "the Apostle and High Priest of his profession" his continual study, and aim to be changed into his image from glory unto glory.

You must be struck in reading the passage before us, on what high ground the apostle takes the Christian. It is possible that some husbands might say, "How can I love such a wife as I have?" It might be a supposable case that some Christian was unequally yoked together with an unbeliever, and found himself for ever bound with a fetter to one possessed of a morose disposition, of a froward temper, of a bitter spirit. He might therefore say, "Surely I am excused from loving in such a case as this. It cannot be expected that I should love that which is in itself so unlovely." But mark, beloved, the wisdom of the apostle. He silences that excuse, which may possibly have occurred to his mind while writing the passage, by taking the example of the Savior, who loved, not because there was loveliness in his Church, but in order to make her lovely. You perceive "he 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 admire her because there was no spot in her; he did not choose her because she had no wrinkle; but fixed his affections where there were multitudinous spots and wrinkles; where everything was deformity, he still set his heart, and would not withdraw till he had loved the spots away, and loved every wrinkle out of her who was the object of his choice. And now he seems to say to every Christian man, however unhappily he may have fared; "If perchance in the lot of Providence you have been yoked to one who deserves but little of your affection, yet if you cannot love because of esteem, love because of pity; if you cannot love because of present merit, then love because of future hope, for possibly, even there, in that bad soil, some sweet flower may grow; he not weary of holy tillage, and of heavenly ploughing and sowing, because at the last there may spring up some fair harvest that shall make glad your soul." He loved his Church and gave

himself for it that he might present it to himself a glorious Church. I do not intend, however, this morning, entering into the duty of husbands, that is not the reason for which I selected the text, but to set forth the love of Jesus towards his people.

And first, let us consider the object of the Savior's love. "He loved the Church;" then let us observe the work which love has carried on in pursuance of its gracious design. "He gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it through the washing of water by the word." Then, thirdly, let us look at the beloved object when the design is accomplished — "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;" and then, let us pause awhile to behold this beloved object, presented by our Lord to himself in the day of his triumphant espousals.

**I.** First, then, may the Spirit of God help us while we look at THE CHOSEN CHURCH, THE OBJECT OF THE SAVIOR'S LOVE.

Some of our brethren are very fond of what is called the general or universal view of God's benevolence. I trust we are not afraid to deal with that, whenever we come across it in Holy Scripture. We believe that "God is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works." We believe him to have the love of benevolence towards all his creatures, and we can preach without bated breath upon such a text as this — "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But some of these brethren are very much afraid of the peculiar and special sign of the Savior's love, and they seem to shrink from a text which has anything particular and discriminating in it; and shake it off from their hand into the fire, as Paul did the viper of old. Now we thank God we have learned to love the distinguishing doctrines of grace; and that predestination and discrimination are not hard words for us to pronounce now, neither do they grate upon our ears; but we love to read this text, and put the emphasis upon the accusative case. Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it. We perceive that Christ did not love the world in the sense in which the term "loved" is here meant. We see here that Christ gave himself not for the world, but for it, that is the Church. In the sense in which he is said here to give himself, he did so for none except his chosen people, the Church; his one, special, and particular object of affection. It is not thus that Christ has loved universal creatureship-and all mankind alike without exception or difference-but he loved the Church, and gave himself for it.

Now what is this Church which Jesus Christ loved, if it be not the entire company of the elect? As many as the Father gave him from before the foundation of the world, whose names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the stars began to shine-as many as were taken by him to be the sheep of his pasture, the jewels of his crown, the children of his love, the subjects of his kingdom, the members of his body, each one of them being particularly known to him, and chosen in him before the mountains lifted their heads into the clouds-so many compose the Church of Christ which was the object of his redeeming love.

We have to search for these chosen ones in what is called the Church visible. We know that they are not all Israel who are of Israel, and that the visible Church is not identical with that Church which Christ loved, and for which he gave himself. There is a Church invisible, and this is the center, and life of the Church visible; what the wheat is to the chaff and heap upon the threshing floor, such are these living Christians amongst the mass of professors in the world. There is a distinction which we cannot see, which it is not for us to try and make manifest, lest, haply, in endeavoring to root up the tares, we root up the wheat also. There is an unseen Church which becomes visible in heaven, which will be apparent and manifest at the coming of the Son of man. This it is which Christ loved, and for which he gave himself.

Now, observe what this Church was by nature, for that is the subject of our discourse just now upon this first head. The Church which Christ loved was in her origin as sinful as the rest of the human race. Have the damned in hell fallen through Adam's transgression? So had the saved in glory once. The sin which was imputed to lost spirits was equally and with as fatal consequences imputed to them, and had it not been for the incoming of the covenant head, the second Adam, they had for ever suffered with the rest. They, too, were alike depraved in nature. Is the heart deceitful above all things in the unregenerate? So it is in the elect before regeneration. Was the will perverse? Was the understanding darkened? Was the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint in the case of those who continued in sin? It was just the same at first with those who have been by sovereign grace taken into the heart of Christ. "We were," says the apostle, "by nature the children of wrath even as others." Remember that between the brightest saint in heaven and the blackest sinner in hell, there is no difference except that which Christ has made. Had those glorified ones been left to continue in their natural state, they would have sinned as foully and as constantly as

the worst of sinners have done. To begin with, there is no difference between the election and the non-election. They are all alike fallen; "they are all gone out of the way,-they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Nay, more, this Church of Christ is made up of persons who are actually defiled by their own transgressions. Are you and I members of that Church? Ah, then, we are compelled to confess that in us by nature dwelt all manner of concupiscence, vileness, and an evil heart of unbelief, ever prone to depart from the living God and to rebel against the Most High. And what since have we done? Or rather, what have we not done?

***"We wandered each a different way,  
But all the downward road."***

We did not all fall into the same vices, but still when the black catalogue of sin is read, we have to weep over it, and to say, "Such were some of us." But why we should make a part of Christ's Church is a question that never can be answered except with this one reply, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Do the wicked sink to hell with their sins like millstones about their necks? We should have sunk there too, and as rapidly and as fatally, unless eternal love had said, "Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom." Look at Christ's Church as you see her visibly in the world, and I ask you, brethren, though she has much about her that is admirable, whether there is not much that might cause her Lord to cast her away. Even in her regenerate estate, she speaks truly when she says, "she is black as the tents of Kedar." Mark the hypocrites that come into the Christian Church and that mar her purity. Observe the formalists that crowd her courts, that sit as God's people sit, and sing as God's people sing, but have hearts full of rottenness and villainy. Observe even the true saints-how unbelieving, how carnally-minded often, how childish, how ready to murmur against God. How few of them are fathers in Israel. When they ought to be teachers they have need to be instructed in the first elements of the faith. What heresies come into the Church, and how many unstable minds are carried away with them. What divisions there are! How one saith, "I am of Paul;" and another, "I am of Apollos;" and a third, "I am of Christ." What envyings there are, what backbitings of those that are eminent for usefulness. What suspicions against those who are a little more zealous than their fellows! My brethren, what a want of affection we can see in the Church of Christ; how little

brotherly kindness, how little sympathy. On the other hand, how much of pride is discovered: how much caste creeps in and prevails even among those who profess to be brethren! How we find some claiming to be lords in God's heritage, and taking to themselves names and titles to which they have no right, seeing that "One is our Master," and we are not to be called "Rabbi" among men. When I look at the Church even with a blinded eye, having no power to see her as God's omniscient eye must see, yet is she covered with spots. Well may she wear her veil and say, "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." O Church of God, how is it Jesus Christ could love thee, for even in thy Church-capacity and Church-estate how much there is that could make him say, "Thou art reprobate silver; thou shalt be cast into the fire." Lo, how ranch there is that must make him say of thee,

"Salt is good, but this salt has lost its savor, and wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is henceforth good for nothing but to be trodden under foot of men."

And yet you see, dear friends, it is written that Christ loved his Church, and gave himself for it. I think I see it — a piece of ground untilled; neither hedged, nor walled, not covered with vines, nor redolent with the perfume of sweet flowers, but it is a spot in the wilderness, filled with the thorn, and the thistle, and the brier; her hedges are broken down; the stones of her wall are scattered; the wild boar out of the wood wasteth her; all kinds of unclean creatures lurk among her weeds and brambles. Oh, how is it, thou Lord of glory, that thou couldst buy, at the price of thy heart's blood, such a waste piece of ground as that? What couldst thou see in that garden that thou shouldst determine to make it the fairest spot of all the earth, that should yield thee the richest of all fruit?

Methinks, again, I see the Church of God, not as a fair maid decorated for the marriage-day with jewels, and carrying herself right gloriously both in her person and her apparel; but I see her as a helpless child, neglected by her parents, cast out, unwashed, unclothed, left uncared for, and covered with her filth and blood. No eye pities her, no arm comes to bring her salvation. But the eye of the Lord Jesus looks upon that infant, and straightway love beams forth from that eye, and speaks from that lip, and acts through that hand; he says, "Live!" and the helpless infant is cared for: she is nurtured; she is decked with dainty apparel; she is fed, and clothed, and sustained, and made comely through the comeliness of him who chose

her at the first. Thus it is that strong love moved the grace of God, and the Church found that Christ gave himself for it.

I must not, however, leave this point without just reminding you of what kind of love it is which Jesus Christ gives to this Church: you perceive it is the love of a husband. Now the love of a husband is special. Those gentlemen who think that Christ did not love the Church more than he loved the rest of the world, must have a very queer idea of how a husband ought to love his wife, for it says, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church;" and surely a husband ought to love his wife more than he loves other people. Therefore Christ cherishes for the Church a special, particular affection, which is set upon her rather than upon the rest of mankind. The Lord has set his Church as much above the rest of the world, as he has fixed his own throne above the kings and princes of this lower earth and the day shall come when she, "fair as the moon and clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," shall be recognized as being the favourite of heaven, the peculiar treasure of Christ-his regalia, the crown of his head, the bracelet of his arm, the breastplate of his heart, the very center and core of his own love. Let us not cavil at this truth, for it is exceedingly precious. Let us seek the honey out of it, and believe that Christ loves the Church with a special love.

Again, a husband loves his wife with a constant love, and so does Christ his Church. He will not cast her away to-morrow having loved her to-day. He does not vary in his affection. He may change in his display of affection, but the affection itself is still the same. A husband loves his wife with an enduring love; it never will die out: he says, "Till death us do part will I cherish thee;" but Christ will not even let death part his love to his people. "Nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." A husband loves his wife with a hearty love, with a love that is true and intense. It is not mere lip-service. He does not merely speak, but he acts; he is ready to provide for her wants; he will defend her character; he will vindicate her honor; because his heart is set upon her. It is not merely with the eye that he delighteth now and then to glance upon her, but his soul hath her continually in his remembrance: she has a mansion in his heart from whence she can never be cast away. She has become a portion of himself; she is a member of his body, she is part of his flesh and of his bones; and so is the Church to Christ for ever, an eternal spouse. He says,

*“Forget thee, I will not, I cannot; thy name  
Engraved on my heart doth for ever remain;  
The palms of my hands whilst I look on, I see  
The wounds I received when suffering for thee.”*

Now let us leave this point, only reminding you again, that this Church is only a Church of Christ, because he has made her so. She had no right or title to his affection; he loved her because he chose to do so, and having once loved her, he never will divorce her: she shall be his, world without end.

**II.** And now I shall want your patience a few minutes on the second point, and that is, THE WORK WHICH LOVE SEEKS TO ACCOMPLISH IN ITS GRACIOUS DESIGNS.

Since the Church is not fit for Christ by nature, he resolved to make her so by grace. He could not be in communion with sin. Therefore it must be purged away. Perfect holiness was absolutely necessary in one who was to be the bride of Christ. He purposes to work that in her, and to make her meet to be his spouse eternally. The great means by which he attempts to do this, is, “he gave himself for her.”

Beloved, I wish I had the power of speech this morning as one sometimes has it, or rather, I wish that another had to handle such a weighty theme as this, for how can I set forth to you the preciousness of this gift? He gave himself for his Church. Had he given his crown and royalty, and come down to earth for a while, that were mercy. Had he given up for a time the happiness and pleasure of his Father’s house, this were somewhat-and this he did. But it was not enough. He would not merely leave his glory, and part with his crown, but he

must give himself. Here he is on earth, born of the Virgin; a helpless infant, he slumbers at her breast. Throughout his life, foxes had holes, and birds of the air nests, but “He had not where to lay his head.” He hath given you much in this. “He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” The thorn crown is on his brow, the lash of the scourge is on his back, the spear is at his breast, the nails are in his hands and feet. He has given you much, but now he is about to give you all he has. He is stripped naked to his shame; he gives his last garment that he may cover the nakedness of man, but when he cries, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!” when having drank the last drop of the bitter

cup of woe, he bows his head, and says, "It is finished!" and gives up the ghost, he has given you all that he can give, for he has given you himself. He gives you his Godhead; that comes on earth, but is veiled in clay; he gives you his entire manhood, for his body is given to the scourge and tomb, and his soul to agony and death-he gives himself.

Perhaps you will say, "But how does his giving himself tend to cleanse his Church?" You know, beloved, how the precious blood of his heart takes away sin; how the righteousness of his life covers his Church, and makes her beautiful in the sight of God; you know how the water which flowed with the blood purifies and sanctifies his people. But, perhaps, you will never realize better how Christ gives himself to you than you do at the sacramental table. There in type and symbol you see in that bread, his broken body; you see set forth in shadow in that wine, his blood; and what do you with that bread? Do you look at it? ay! with tears in your eyes. What do you with the cup? Do you regard it? Yes, with loving eyes. But this is not all. "Take, eat!" saith the Savior. "Drink ye, drink ye all of it," saith he; and as you eat and drink, you are thereby reminded of the great truth, that he has given you his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink; and that these, like some healing medicine, will purge you of all diseases, cleanse you of every lingering cancer, go through and through the secret parts of your soul, and expel with their sanctifying influence the very roots and seeds of corruption, and make you perfect in every good work to do his will. I admit that you may not feel this at present, but you have that within you in having received Christ, which will be the death of all sin. He has given himself to dwell in you, to kill every lust, to slay every corruption, to expel the Canaanites out of the Canaan of your heart, till King David shall reign in Jerusalem and the Jebusite shall be put away for ever. Beloved, this is the way in which he sanctifies and cleanses his Church, by giving himself for it, first upon the tree, and afterwards in the Church, by the work of the Holy Spirit as a quickening and cleansing power, dwelling there evermore.

When the text says, "he gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse it," is there not allusion here to the double cure of sin? Here is Christ sanctifying by the Spirit, that is to say, taking away the propensity to sin, killing the power of sin in us, helping us to reign over our corruptions that we may in heart and life be pure, even as our Father which is in heaven is pure. And as to the cleansing, may not that allude to justification and pardon? Of that we spoke particularly last Saturday to our own joy if not to yours. We are complete in him; we are perfect in Christ Jesus, and the



design of Christ is, that sanctification shall be as perfect as justification, that the power of sin shall be as thoroughly slain as the guilt of it, that altogether sin shall cease to be in the Christian.

But what is the outward instrumentality which Christ uses? The text says, "With the washing of water by the word." We Baptists are generally thought to lay great stress upon baptism. There can be no greater mistake made, than to suppose that we exaggerate its importance. I sometimes think we do not value it enough. Those who practice infant baptism might be much more fairly charged with exaggerating the importance of baptism, than those of us, who scrupulously require a profession of faith from all persons, before we think of baptizing them into the name of the Lord. I do not believe that baptism is intended here, nor even referred to. I know that the most of commentators say it

is. I do not think it. It strikes me that one word explains the whole. Christ sanctifies and cleanses us by the washing of water, but what sort of water? By the Word. The water which washes away sin, which cleanses and purifies the soul, is the Word. The Word of God has a cleansing influence. It comes and convinces the man of sin. It makes him see his impurity so as to hate it. When applied with power by the Holy Spirit, it works repentance; it leads the man to weep and bewail himself before God. That same Word leads to faith in Christ Jesus, and faith works by love and purifies the soul. The Word is preached, the Word is believed; and as soon as ever that Word is believed, it begins to act like water in the heart of man. You cannot receive the gospel and yet be as filthy as you were before. My brother, if you really welcome the truth, those grosser sins will be washed away at once. Next, as you discover them, your besetting sins will be cleansed away, and constantly, as you understand the Word better, believe it more firmly, and feel its effect more powerfully, you will by it, as by water, be washed and cleansed from all indwelling sin, till you are sanctified and cleansed and made fit to enter into heaven. This one thing let me say solemnly, I go not into this world to preach the efficacy of baptismal water in cleansing souls from sin. Let those who care to do it, and think it their office, magnify their office exceedingly. Let those who think that sacraments have necessarily efficacy in them, stand out and boldly declare it; but, as for us, we believe that the water which cleanses is none other than the Word of God, which is preached by man, and applied by the Holy Ghost. We rest upon the uplifted cross of Christ, upon the

doctrine of his atonement, on the great truth of his abiding presence in the Church of God, and ever pray, "Sanctify us by thy truth, thy word is truth."

And, mark you, the world has had a fair trial of both plans. Throughout the dark ages the world tried the efficacy of baptisms and sacraments; for century after century Popery and priest-craft gulled the world with the idea that Baptism and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper were a prescription for cleansing away sin. What was the result? Were not the cities filled with harlots? Were not the dungeons crowded with prisoners? Had not the earth become an aceldama, and was not the whole land, like Sodom, reeking with filth? Then came Luther and Calvin, and though these men held not all the truth in its fullness, yet, at least they held "the washing of water by the Word," and Luther, and Zwingle, and Calvin declared, "The world's great purgative is faith in Jesus Christ, not sacraments. The priesthood lies with Christ, and not with men. Priest-craft is to be put away. Justification is by faith in Jesus Christ, and that faith comes by hearing, and that hearing by the preaching of the Word." And what happened? Why, the world woke as from a long slumber. She found herself in chains; she snapped the chains as Samson snapped the green withes. Progress came-knowledge, light, truth; and if the world be not holy, yet what strides has she made since the day when Tetzel's "Indulgence for Sin" defiled the world through and through to its very center with blasphemy! We have but to keep on using this washing of water by the continual preaching of the Word, and the day shall come when our poor planet shall be cleansed from blood and filth, and shall come out from the mists in which she is now swathed, and shine like her sister stars, bright in the light of her God; and the only sounds that shall be heard from her shall be songs of joy and peace, because the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. This, then, is Christ's way of cleansing and sanctifying his Church-by the washing of water, that is to say, by the Word.

**III.** And now let us pass on, again troubling your patience, to the third point-THE LOVED ONE AS SHE IS PERFECTED.

One is inclined to draw a veil over the face of beauty, which never can be painted. She is to be a glorious Church. We love our own highly-favored Church. I am sure there is not a member of it-at least I do not know one-but what feels his heart leap every time he thinks of this Church, which God has so prospered, and blessed, and honored. For all that, we are nothing but a militant Church, and a very imperfect one- a Church that has cause to mourn and humble herself before God for many sins; and I, as

pastor, looking upon you all, cannot help while I bless God for all I see that is excellent, bowing mine own head in the dust because of the sins of a people favored with the gospel, who, nevertheless, have much to confess before God. We are not a glorious Church. You can cast your eyes upon such Churches as the Moravians, who gave themselves up, men and women, to Christ's cause, and scattered themselves all over the world, preaching the gospel. Greenland was not too cold, the Sahara was not too hot-they sacrificed everything for Christ; but yet the Moravian Church with all its excellence has much of which it may well repent. It is not a glorious Church. You may look where you like, and you shall see that the dust of travel is still upon the wilderness Church. She has the presence of God, she has her Shekinah, but alas, she is troubled within by a mixed multitude. Korab, Dathan, and Abiram, sometimes vex her. Her Master has to send her fiery serpents sometimes, and she still needs to keep the brazen serpent lifted up every day; for even in her ranks, there are some that still need to look and live. We have no glorious Church on earth, nor do I think we can get much idea of what a glorious Church is. I tried yesterday, last Sunday rather, (and all the days since then seem to have gone so rapidly that I thought it yesterday). I tried last Sunday to show what a glorious person was. But what must a glorious Church be? There is one lamp; well, that is very bright, very pleasing; you like to have it in your room; but think of all London illuminated to the very top of the cross of St. Paul's, and what an idea you then have of brightness. Now, one glorified Christian is a lamp. Think, then, of all heaven, with its domes of glory lit up with ten thousand times ten thousand companies of blood-bought spirits, whom Jesus Christ has taken up-a glorious Church! One flower is very sweet. I smell its perfume. But I walk into some vast conservatories, into some gentleman's garden, acres in extent, and there are beds of flowers, the blue, and scarlet, and yellow. I see the verbena, the calceolaria and the geranium and many others, all in order, and in ranks. Oh, how glorious is this! Those undulating lawns, those well-trimmed hedges, those trees so daintily kept, all growing in such luxuriance. One flower is sweet, but a garden! a garden! who can tell how sweet this is! So, one glorified saint is one of God's flowers, but a glorious Church is Christ's garden. A drop of water may be very precious to a thirsty tongue, but a river full of it! Children are pleased, when for the first time in their lives they sail across some little lake, but how surprised they are when they come to the deep and rolling sea, which seems without shore or bottom. Well, so pleased am I at the very thought of the glorious Church. As yet I have never seen anything but

one little lake-this Church, the Church of God in England, the Church of God in the world, what is it after all but “as a drop of a bucket!” but the glorious Church-the whole of the people of God gathered together in one, all perfectly free from sin, all made like unto Christ, and all bedight and bright with the glory which excelleth even that which Moses and Elms had when they were with Christ in the holy mountain, or such as Moses had when he came down from the top of Horeb, when he had been forty days with God-a glorious Church, a mighty company of glorified beings.

But do observe what is said of her. She is to be “Without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” “Without spot” — that is much; but you see spots can be taken off. The face is washed, and the spot comes out. The garment is thoroughly cleansed, and there are some chemicals and acids applied, and the spots can be got out. Though, truly, some of us have scarlet spots of a crimson-like dye, yet the blood of Jesus is a wonderful detergent, and it can get out spots of any color. Though we may have been lying in the ley-tub of sin even for seventy years, yet Christ will get all the spots out of us if we are a part of his Church. Though his Church be double-dyed, yet Christ will make her white as snow.

But that is not the wonder of the text; the marvel is, “without spot or wrinkle.” You may get a spot out of your face, but you cannot smooth out a wrinkle. You may make what efforts you please, but you cannot get rid of your wrinkles. You that are getting old, if time has come and driven his plough across your brow, why there the furrow will remain, it will not come out. Yes, but the Church of Christ is to be without wrinkle as well as without spot. How will he get the wrinkles out? There is no chemical that I know of that can get rid of them; but Jesus Christ has a sacred art, having in himself by the washing of water, even the Word, the power to get wrinkles out. Lightfoot says there is an allusion here to the carefulness of the Jew in his ablutions. The Jew not only washes very carefully when he is purifying himself for worship, but lest any dust or impurity should remain in any crack of the skin, or in any wrinkle, he seeks by washing again and again with the severest care, to get out the least filth that would be in the wrinkle. Very good, Dr. Lightfoot, but the Jew cannot wash wrinkles out; he can wash away the dirt, but he cannot get rid of the wrinkle. But Christ can banish away both. Another good writer says, that perhaps there is an allusion here to the fuller’s trade. The fuller gets out the spots first, and then as the cloth may have been so folded up that there are creases and wrinkles in it, he uses divers stretchings and millings, till at last he manages

to get out the creases and wrinkles from the cloth as well as the spot. I do not know whether there is an allusion to that, but this I know, that there shall not be a spot of sin on any of God's people, nor yet a wrinkle of infirmity. They shall lose the effect of old age and weakness in their bodies, and they shall lose the defects and infirmities in their souls. The outward spot shall be removed, and the inward deformity, which was like a wrinkle ingrained into their very nature, this shall also be taken away.

But do observe the next word. The Holy Ghost seems to exhaust language to describe this purity. He says, "Without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!" She shall have nothing like a spot, nothing that can be construed into a wrinkle; she shall be fair, and the world shall be compelled to acknowledge that she is. The eyes of God shall look upon her; and though he sees in darkness, and discovereth the hidden things of night, even he shall discern neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, in any one single part of the body or the soul of any one of the members of the mystical body of Christ. Oh what perfection, beloved, is this! I cannot speak of it, but I can delight in thinking of it. I was trying to think last night, what I should be like when I was freed from my spots and wrinkles. Ah! you can all see them now-I wonder you put up with them sometimes; but what shall I be when I have parted with them for ever? And I shall get rid of them. Death is stamped on every infirmity: the Lord has put the poison into the heart of my inbred sins, and bless his name for it. But what will you and I be like when we are perfect? No hasty temper, no sloth, no wrong thoughts, no cold hearts, no dilatoriness in prayer, no sluggishness in praise. Oh, brethren, there will be some of you so different, we shall scarcely know you. When some brethren die, I believe they will go to heaven, but they will be strangely altered by the time they get there. They are good people, but they have such crotchety ways, such queer humours, such hot tempers, that surely we shall have to be very wise people to know them in heaven. We shall need to be informed who they are, they will be so greatly changed; but this will be the happy state of all, whether altered much or little, we shall be "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

I must not dwell longer, though the theme invites. Hypocrisies, heresies, declensions, divisions, all these will be put away from the Church. Infirmity, doubt, sin, fear of every kind, will be put away from every believer, and we shall be presented blameless, holy, and unreprouvable in the sight of God.

#### **IV.** And lastly, THE LOVED ONE IS TO BE PRESENTED.

It is said, he is “to present her to himself.” Every day Christ presents his people to his Father in his intercession. The Holy Spirit presents poor sinners every day in conversion to Christ, but there is to be a day when Christ will present his glorious Church “to himself.” When he shall come, then shall be the wedding day. There shall he heard the cry, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh!” Then the virgins with their lamps trimmed shall go forth to meet him, and his Church shall enter into the supper, to sit down and sup with him and he with her. To-day the Church is like Esther bathing herself in spices, making herself ready for Ahasuerus, her Lord and master; to-day we are espoused, at the coming we shall be married. We are waiting now impatiently for him, then we shall be in his embrace. To-day we wear not the crown, to-day we wave not the palm, but to-morrow when he cometh, we shall be crowned with him and triumph with him. Let us long for his appearing. Let this bright hope sustain you in the dreary months of waiting and the weary hours of fighting, “He cometh! He cometh!” And when he cometh, he will glorify in all his saints, and be admired in those that have believed on him.

I would to God we were all members of his Church. There is only one token of membership which is infallible, and that is, saving faith in Christ. If thou believest in Jesus, thou shalt be without spot or wrinkle; but if thou believest not, thou art not of his Church, neither shalt thou be a partaker of his cleansing power nor of his glorious advent. God give thee a new heart and a right spirit, and wash thee with water this day by the Word, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

# JERICHO CAPTURED.

NO. 629

**PREACHED AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,  
NEWINGTON,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**ON BEHALF OF THE BAPTIST IRISH SOCIETY.**

“And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.” — Joshua 6:2, 3.

I SEE many ministering brethren here. I think I shall follow the example of Martin Luther, who observes that he frequently saw in the Church at Wittemberg sundry learned doctors, and there usually sat there Dr. Justus Jonas and others, of whom he said, that they were infinitely greater and more wise than himself. “But,” said Martin, “I do not therefore alter my style of preaching: I do not preach to them, but I preach to those peasants who come in from the country, and to the citizens of Wittemberg, for then I am quite certain that if they can understand me, Dr. Justus Jonas and the learned divines can understand me too, if they like.” I shall moreover adopt what is said to have been Mr. Wesley’s exhortation to his preachers, namely, aim low. “There is more likelihood,” he says, “of hitting the men than when you fire high.” I may also frankly confess I am reduced to that precept by necessity, since I have no capabilities of firing high, and must therefore shoot low. We shall take our text now, and try, if we can, to get something out of it which may be applicable to the present position of our Society, and see if we cannot draw some words and thoughts from it, which may strengthen, encourage, and nerve us for future action in this good work of God.

The Irish Society has to do with one of the citadels of Romanism, and it strikes me that there is a very evident parallel between our efforts and the

work which Israel had to do against this city of Jericho. Jericho was a strongly defenced city and straitly shut up, so that none went in or came out. And Romanism seems to have accomplished this admirably. It shuts up its disciples so that they are scarcely accessible, and converts from it are few and far between. None, I was about to say, go in-very few, indeed, from us,-and there are very few who ever come out again. Jericho was the frontier city. That being captured, the conquest of the rest of Canaan would be comparatively easy. And Popery is very much the frontier city, the Jericho of our warfare: it stands in the way of the evangelization of the world; it is the great impediment to the spread of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let Jericho fall, and Canaan may weep and howl, for her day has come, And let Rome be subdued, let Romanism be conquered, and the world shall soon be at the feet of that Jesus whom it once despised. We are attacking, I think, in the Irish Society, a Jericho indeed, and we have been long about it; but it has been a very weary task, and the brethren have sometimes been apt to cry, "Let it be given up." I am come on this the first, the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth, peradventure on the sixth day of the week, to cry to these brethren, "Courage, go on still with your rams' horns, bear your testimony, and carry the ark of the Lord round about this city, for the Lord hath delivered it unto your hand; only be ye obedient and courageous, and abide ye his time, for your victory is absolutely sure."

I shall divide what I may have to say this evening into these three parts. It strikes me that the narrative before us teaches us that God would have his people work, and wait, and win. And this is what we have to do to-day as they had of old.

### **I.** First of all God would have his people WORK.

A little upon that. We preach the doctrines of grace, but the doctrines of grace are ever the best soil in which to grow good works. We daily insist upon it that works do not make a man to live, but we equally insist upon it that spiritual life continually manifests itself by holy deeds. The soldiers of God's army, after they had crossed the Jordan, were not to lie still in luxurious ease, till Jericho's walls should crumble down by slow degrees; and though God determined to send Jericho to destruction on a sudden, yet his people are not to sit still upon some neighboring knoll, and expect the catastrophe: they are-to labor, and Jericho is to fall as the result of their toil. Their work is to consist of a daily procession; they are to go in cavalcade round about the wall; the priests are to exercise their functions.



The ark must be carried upon men's shoulders; the men of war are to be there to defend the ark, to clear the way, and to follow also in the rear, to guard it against any sudden attack or any eruption from the city. They are to march thus the whole of the six days; not one day without its parade; not one day without obedience to the great captain of the host. So, brethren, must it be with us. We are to win the world for Christ; this is our high ambition, and it shall be in Christ's name our grand attainment. But it must be by work, by testimony-bearing, by the preaching of the gospel, by continual prayer, by encompassing the city, perpetually serving God, and walking in the path of obedience.

Let us look at this work a little in connection with this narrative. You will observe that the work to be done by Israel was universal. There was a place for each one to occupy. The men of arms were to go round the city, and with them the priests were to march also. Both the ecclesiastical and the military castes shall be represented here. They must neither of them sit still. It is an ill day for God's Church when we conceive that some few are to fight the Lord's battles, and that the rest of us may look on and criticise or applaud. Ye are all of you, my brethren, called to serve God. You recognize this in your creed. Ye know yourselves to be priests, and ye hate the lie which lifts some men into a priesthood, and puts the rest down as "the laity," as though they were nothing better than stones. Ye feel that ye are all called to bear the vessels of the Lord, that ye are a "royal priesthood, a peculiar people," that ye are all set apart for the service of God. But while this is our creed, I am afraid it is not our practice. How many take their seats in the pew, and when they have once made themselves comfortable, consider that their work is entirely wrapped up in listening to sermons, perhaps fumbling in their pockets for a solitary coin on collection occasions for the Missionary Society. It may be now and then—now and then—assisting in some enterprise of usefulness, but this only as an exception to the rule. We shall never see the Church become strong and mighty, till every single member of the Church shall realize his responsibility. We must all encompass this city. Observe, when the Lord fed the multitude, he did not take some of the five loaves, or one of the fishes, but he took all the loaves, though they were barley, and both the fishes, though they were small; and he took care to break all, and to divide all among the people. Nothing of a stock-in-hand was kept in the larder, nothing was laid by, but all was used; and then, by the multiplying power of God, there was sufficient. And so we must rummage the larder, we must

bring out the barley cakes, we must bring forth the fishes, all must be devoted to the Master's cause; and, in the use, ability will be multiplied; in the exercise, grace will be increased, and we shall yet be sufficient for the world's needs.

It has been said, and I think a little calculation will show you that it is correct, that if God were to enable the Christians in this huge city of ours to feel their responsibility, and if every individual Christian were made the means of the conversion of one other—starting with fifty thousand Christians in London, (and let us hope there are as many believers as that: for it is a very small proportion of the professing multitude)—then, considering that there are three millions of souls in London, six years would be sufficient for the conversion of the whole, by the simple agency of each disciple bringing in one of the stray sheep. This does not look as if it were an impossible thing. Only grace is wanted from on high. We must plead with God and bring down the blessing; and when the blessing comes on each man's labor, there certainly is no hindrance in the matter of time, or in the matter of exertion; for, with God's blessing, the conversion of a soul is not a matter that requires us to relinquish business, or that compels us to give up all our time to it. Some five minutes have been by divine grace a sufficient length of time, and half-a-dozen words have proved enough. Courage, my brethren; vast as the work is, if we all go to it with God's blessing it will speedily be accomplished. Our police served us all with a notice the other day, when the snow was on the ground, that we were each one to sweep before our own doors. It was very right that the passenger should go along the footpath without being smothered with the mud and snow commingled. Now what an expense it would have been to clean the streets of London by any other process. It would be difficult for a contractor to undertake it by the year, since he would scarcely know how often he would be called to work. How could an army of men be kept ready to do the work which comes in so strange a fashion—sometimes but once in the year, and sometimes fifty times; but each man sweeps before his own door, and then it is all done early in the morning, and you walk the streets in comfort. Oh that we could but feel that we are to sweep before our own door! Oh that every man would build the dilapidated wall of Jerusalem before his own house! And when this is done, then shall God send victory to his hosts; but I fear it will not be till then. God would have his people work universally.

But, next, he would have them work in his own appointed way. They are not to go in a scramble-in a boyish race round Jerusalem; there must be the soldiers in their troops, the priests in their array, and then again, the men of war to bring up the rear. God would have his people work according to his own revealed will. We must be very tender and jealous here. Whatever may be the opinions about the alteration of the constitution of our Missions, I do trust that we shall, all of us, when we come together, recognize the authority of God, and feel that we can only expect to have his guidance, his help, his blessing, when we walk according to the path which he has marked for us. If I go upon a tour, I do not expect to see certain sights which have been guaranteed to me by my friend, unless I agree to follow the little chart which he has mapped out for me. I cannot expect to have that sublime view of the Alps if I refuse to climb a certain spot and stand there and view the glacier and the snow peak glittering in the sun. And I cannot expect to have God's blessing in my ministry and in the Sunday-school class, unless I keep to "It is written;" and in all things have a tender conscience, and am jealous of myself lest I err. How much more, then, in this greater work in which the whole Church is engaged! My brethren and sisters let us see to it, that in all things we compass this city of Jericho according to the divine order, for only so may we expect to see her walls come crumbling down.

Then, again, remember, they encompassed the city daily. So does God call his Church to work daily. It is very easy for us in a moment of excitement to accomplish a great work; and the most of Christian work now-a-days is, I fear, merely spasmodic. We build chapels by a series of fits, we pay off missionary-society debts by stupendous efforts, and we relapse again into debt and difficulties. I am afraid that as a denomination, we are not fond of working too severely. We know the value of ourselves, of our time, and of our money, and we are not apt to wear ourselves out by any excessive exertion. We have never, I believe, at any period since the unhappy days of Munster, been accused of excess of zeal; we are rather to be accused of quarreling about points on which we differ, than of excessive love of sticking to the practical business of fighting the devil, and winning the world to Christ. But we must come to this, for mark you, if we are to conquer the world we must each of us have our daily work, and keep to it, as God shall give us grace. The wheel must revolve again, and again, and again: it is that perpetual motion of industry which produces wealth, and it must be the ceaseless energy of our zeal, which shall produce spiritual

conquest. We have sharpened our swords and fleshed them well; the younger men among us have had a brush with the foe, and we are beginning to think that like our sober sires we may be quiet; but it must not be so; we must agitate for all truth, for all the doctrines we hold dear, and for the peculiar truths we hold as a denomination. We must keep on fighting for Christ, and fighting for Christ every day. We must sleep in our armor, we must begin to feel that the sword cleaves to our hand and cannot be separated from it, we must give ourselves so entirely to the work to which God has called us, that wherever we are, whatever we may be engaged in, men may take knowledge of us as to what is our work and calling. In this Irish Society there must be no standing still, no ceasing of the trumpet, no withdrawing of so much as a single ram's horn. The testimony must still be kept up, the witness-bearing must become more constant; we must preach, and teach, and pray, and work, and live, and, if needs be, die daily until this Jericho be stormed.

Nor have we exhausted the metaphors with which our text supplies us, for surely we may add that God would have his people work in faith. We are told by Paul that "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down." It seems to me, that was a grand spectacle when the first man went forward step by step, and all the rest followed, the priests too, all of them confident that they were doing the best thing to make Jericho's ramparts fall to the ground. "Why," the fool might have said, "you are doing nothing, you are not loosening a single stone," and at the end of the fifth or sixth day, I suppose it was suggested by many, "What is the good of it all?" But at least the most of those who encompassed the city, were men of faith, or else it could not have been said, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down:" "Yes," they seemed to say, "she will come down, she will come down, she stands like a rock, she has not moved, there is not a beam loosed, nor a cord broken, not a house in ruins, nor a tent that has fallen, not a single stone that has crumbled from her battlements; but down she shall come;" and on they went with steady tramp, and though they saw no corpses blocking up their pathway, though their arms were not red with blood, though they heard no shriek of those that fly, and could utter no shout of victory, yet they were as confident as they were when actually the walls began to rock, and the dust and smoke went up to heaven, and the shrieks of the slain made glad the foeman's ear. We must encompass this city in full faith. Brethren, is the preaching of the gospel a power? If you think it is not, never try it again. Is the gospel mighty to save? Will the gospel come out

victorious? If you have any doubt, slink back to your cowardly repose, but let the man whom God sends never doubt. If you have achieved no successes, if after fifty years your trumpet of jubilee was exceeding small, if after fifty years it was something like a ram's horn that had not been bored, and could not make any noise at all, yet still go on; your time for shouting has not come yet, but your time for compassing the city is always present. Go on with it, go on with it, and God will not permit you to end till you have won the victory. So let us notice once more under this head of work, they worked with patience and courage, God kept this people laboring in the presence of difficulty. They were compassing the city, taking their walks, but always with the formidable walls of Jericho close under their eyes. Surely they must have had these walls photographed on their eyes and on their brains. "I shall know every stone in it," says one; "six times I have been round, nay twelve times before the walls began to rock—twelve times! Seven was a perfect number, but we have gone beyond it, and yet the walls do not stir." "Mark well her bulwarks, and count the towers thereof." These men were practical surveyors of Jericho; they could well understand the strength of the battlements, how many feet long the huge stones were at the corners, and how near the stars the loftiest towers were raised. They had the difficulty, I say, always before them, yet they kept on in simple faith, going round the city. Sometimes we get into the habit of shutting our eyes to difficulty; that will not do: faith is not a fool, faith does not shut her eyes to difficulty, and then run head — foremost against a brick wall — never. Faith sees the difficulty, surveys it all, and then she says, "By my God will I leap over a wall;" and over the wall she goes. She never brings out the flaming accounts of "Signs of the Times," in her favor; she does not sit down, and say that evidently public sentiment is changing; she does not reckon upon any undercurrents that may be at work, which she is told by Mistress Gossip really are doing great things, but she just looks at it, and does not mind how bad the thing is reported to be; if anybody can exaggerate the difficulty, faith is of the same noble mind as that famous warrior, who when told there were so many thousand soldiers against him, replied, "There are so many more to be killed." So faith reckons: "So many more difficulties, so many more things to he overcome;" and even impossibilities she puts down as only so much burden to he cast upon Him, with whom nothing is impossible. She keeps Jericho's walls before her. And I would that we, dear friends, knew more than we do, the perfect hopelessness of our work of seeking to convert Ireland to the gospel, for there never was a task undertaken, methinks, that had less

hopefulness about it. I want you to be driven more and more to think, as far as the agency of man is concerned, that the thing is out of the category of the possible almost, and out of the category of the probable altogether; and when you can get to that point, and hear the voice, "Compass the city seven days," yet still have courage to go on, on, on, notwithstanding all the manifest difficulties—then when God has taught you your nothingness, and brought you to feel that if victory be given, it is all his own, and that divine omnipotence and sovereignty must wear the crown, then, I say, he will make the old rampart rock, and the harlot of the seven hills shall rue the day when Israel shouts, when her sons are slain and God shall triumph right gloriously. God, however, would have his people work: that is the first point — we are agreed on that, let us unite to carry it out. "The sermon is not done" said one, when he came out of Church— "it is all said, but it is not all done;" so let me close this head with saying, that it is not done, it is only said, I have said that God would have his people work, let us go and work. Let us begin to-night. If we have been lazy hitherto, if there are any Issachars here like the strong ass crouching down between two burdens, just get up Sir Issachar, and carry your burden. If there is any brother here that has been saying, "God will have his own," let him mind what he is at, or God will never have him, for God's own do not talk at that rate, and do not say that God's purposes are to be an excuse for man's indifference. Let him shake that off, for he cannot take such a plea as that before the judgment bar, he knows he cannot; therefore, do not let him try it on here. Let us try and work well for God; you in your Sunday-school classes, you in your preaching stations, you in your tract distributions, you here in England, you, my brethren, across the sea, and you in the Emerald Isle; compassing the city still, seven times.

**II.** We now come, in the second place, to consider that God would have his people WAIT.

The delay must have sorely tried the faith and patience of the Israelites. "Time flies," and time is very precious, these Israelites must have thought, "Why make us wait. If we have to tarry a long while before the walls of Jericho, why then, what a time it will take to conquer all the interior; and if we begin with a long delay, our enemies may gather courage, and before we have made our entrenchments behind which we may shield ourselves, the host will be upon us, and we shall be cut to pieces." It must have seemed to every merely thoughtful person in the camp of Israel, that it was imperative that the first city should be taken as speedily as possible, so that

the people might he encouraged, and their enemies scattered; and it would give to those weary pilgrims some settled place to which they might retire with comfort, for they were, I suppose, still in their tents and longing for the time, when like the rest of the people of the land they might dwell in their own houses. But they must keep quiet; and, according to present appearances, they must remain so indefinitely. The people could not tell how long they were to tarry there. And just observe, my brethren, how very trying it must have been to them to wait. I do not know so much about the priests, for I am afraid priests are apt to be very contented with doing nothing, but not so with soldiers. There are a great many brethren who seem to be perfectly satisfied to rest at ease, but men of war do not generally seem to be of that temperament. When I was in the military prison at Dublin, I observed a form of punishment there. Men were carrying large shot. A man took up a large shot and carried it to the end of the yard, and he afterwards had to pick that shot up and bring it back again. I said, "How is it that you do not let them take all the shot to that end and pile them up there?" The officer said, "We used to do so but it was no use, for when the fellows had piled them up they felt they were doing something, but now we make them carry the shot from one end of the yard to the other, and then back again, and back again, and they feel they have to work hard and do nothing. That is always miserable work to the soldiers." Many of our soldiers at Sebastopol made bitter complaints at not being led to battle. And you will often have heard young military men say, that they hate the inactivity of peace, they want to be doing something. Now these men of war were kept for six days marching round and round the city, and they must have felt themselves to have been doing very little all that week. That is what I feel with regard to this Irish Society, and there are many of us too, who, if we speak plainly, must say that we think that we have done very little, sorry little; we remember two or three things that have been successes; and two or three things that have been a very long way off success. Sometimes we have complained that there have been asylums provided for brethren sent yonder, and we have wondered why such brethren were sent at all, and we have said, "Well, if this do-nothing affair is to keep on long, we must get others who will do something; for at present we are in this position, 'What is John doing?' 'Nothing.' 'What is Tom doing?' 'Helping John.'" We want to see something done, and therefore it is hard to wait; but we must check ourselves. Our vehemence should urge us to use all proper means, though it should never be of that sort, which would make us relax our efforts because we do not

immediately achieve all the success which we desire. My brethren in Christ Jesus, though as men of war we would rather come to close quarters and see more done, yet as men of God, we must keep to our posts of duty, and learn how to wait.

Besides this, what rendered the waiting so very galling, was (what must have struck their reason, if it did not assail their faith,) the utter desperateness of the case. How could they hope to win that city by simply going round and round? "Give me a good ladder," says one, "a rope-ladder, and a couple of good irons at the end of it; just let me hear the clank upon the top-stone, and I am your man to lead the 'forlorn hope,' and there are fifty thousand of us to follow, and we will soon have Judah's standard waving on the top, and make the sons of Jericho know what the sons of Abraham can do." But no; they must just march round the place till they have compassed the city twelve times. And so, brethren, there are certain spirits apt to say, "Could not we do more by adopting these methods, and such other expedients." See how certain of our brethren of another denomination feel that if they can but get a golden ladder, if they get the assistance of the regium donum, in this way Jericho's walls may be scaled; and there is the temptation to look about us, and ask for some assistance over and above the power which lies in the simple gospel; but we must not do it. Away with our methods, and state-crafts, and policies, and suggestions of the crafty and cunning, and all the wisdom of the worldly. God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of Christ. With the simplicity of children, let us still believe that our Father's means are the best; and though as soldiers we cannot understand it, yet as children let us believe it, and keep on compassing the city still, for Jericho's walls must fall, as sure as God is in heaven.

And methinks there is another thing which must have made it hard, and it is this, that most probably the citizens of Jericho insulted them from the walls. I should think they kept far enough off to be out of arrowshot: but yet it is just possible that if they could not hear the taunt, "What do these feeble Jews do," yet they must have seen the tokens of impudence and impertinence which came from over the wall. This, mark you, is very galling to men of arms. We feel our hands fumbling at the hilts of our swords when provoked by the taunts and jeers of our enemies. "What have you done," say they, "ye soupers, and Protestants, and Methodists, and Presbyterians, against the invincible bulwarks of Rome. Your paper bullets, what have they accomplished against the iron walls of Babylon?" We can



hear their jeers, we know the sound of revelry and mirth. But what of this? Though, again, I say, as soldiers we might grow courageous, and dash rashly to the fight, or retire from it because there is nothing to be earned but dishonor, yet, as Christians, we will do what seems absurd to reason, but what is ever justifiable to faith, we will keep on in God's own style; we will fight his battles after his own methods, and we doubt not that though it does seem a strange, mad freak, to attempt to drive out the priests from Ireland by the simple proclamation of the truth, yet the day shall come when wisdom shall be justified of all her children.

Now, brethren, we know that God has his reasons for making us wait. It is for his own glory, we doubt not. We know that all things work together for good, and, we believe, it will be ultimately for our profit. When I have read some masterly tragic poem, and verse after verse has dwelt upon the horrible portion of the tale, did I wish it shortened? Would I have had the author leave out one of those dark verses? Not I. It is true when the poem ended with a shout of victory, and with the tramp of martial men through the city, when they returned in triumph, our heart leaped; we rejoiced when we came to that last stanza, but we wished not the poem shortened; we never wanted to have any of those verses blotted out. God is writing a great poem of human history, the subject is the victory of truth, the destruction of Anti-Christ. Let the history be long. Who wants it shortened? who wants a brief story on so exceedingly interesting a subject as this, from so great an author? Nay, let it drag on what some may call its weary length, we are sure that when we come to read it, as God will write it, we shall wish the story longer. We will not complain of its extent, for the result is we shall see more of God, and learn more of his mind. You want the millennium to come to-morrow, do you? May you get it, but I think it is probable you will not. I do not know how history appears to you who profess to understand it, but it does not read to me like a thing which is going to end yet. I have always been told about the "signs of the times." There always were such speculations, - in 1766 and 1666; but the times of the end did not come, and I think they will not come now. It strikes me that we shall have something more elaborate yet than has ever come from the divine pen, and we may have to go not only through another canto, but through several more books before we shall come to the end of the story. One reason why I think the world's present state will not wind up for the present is, because all the prophets say it will, and they have always been a lying generation, from the first even to the last. I mean the prophets who

make the business profitable, who only use Scripture as the Norwood Gipsy uses the cards; who shuffle texts to foretell fortunes for nations and men. We shall go on many a day yet. We may have to wait for another century, ay, another twenty centuries, perhaps, we cannot tell; but our business is still to remember that it shall be after all for our eternal benefit, and for God's everlasting glory to keep on; to wait, wait, wait till we grow well-nigh weary, but the victory comes as surely after all as though it came at first.

While we are waiting, however, I think it is well to take a little comfort from what we are doing. We are waiting, that is the posture of this Irish Society; but we may console ourselves in it, as the men who were compassing Jericho might have done. "Well," they could say, "we have not taken Jericho, but there is Rahab that has believed- there are a few saved: you can tell them on your fingers almost, but they are very precious, and they are of the kind which should be esteemed very valuable. There is Rahab, her name is illustrious, and her story when it is told, has made many another Rahab seek and find a Savior. Not altogether without result was that attack on Jericho; and ye have not lost your money, you that have subscribed to our Irish Society. There has been many a sinner saved, and many can tell of eternal love that has sought out with eyes of patience eternity's choice jewels, and of divine sovereignty that has made its crown to glisten and glitter for ever with those precious things when found. You have had Rahab, yes, and you have had some that God has made useful to others. I can bear witness that there have come from Ireland some of the most earnest young men, upon whom my eyes ever rested-good men and true-who love their Lord and Master, and whose highest delight is to speak well of his name. You may wait patiently on that reflection

Moreover, the men of arms may say, "We do not take the city it is true, but we yet keep our ground." If we were to leave Jericho, we should be giving up our foothold of Canaan. And if we forsake Ireland, we might relinquish all hope of the Papacy falling; but we keep our foothold, at least we take our stand on the rock; we have taken the seizin of the land, and, though little, it is like the handful which William the Conqueror took up when he said, "I have taken the seizin of England hereby;" and though you may amalgamate the management of this Society with another, you will not give up the distinctive aim and object of the Society, which is to keep a corner at least of the Emerald Isle for God and for his Christ.

And then again they can say, "We are bearing testimony." Every man that looks over the wall of Jericho can see the ark of the covenant, can see the troopers of God with their swords upon their thighs; they see what they never saw before. Oh, worshippers of idols, ye see today the ark of the true God borne round your walls! Oh ye that bow to Baal and adore Ashtaroth, the gods of wood and stone; the true God, the Mighty One, Jehovah is come out against you, and the trumpets sound defiance to your power, while the warriors of God shout for your overthrow. You are bearing testimony against the sin of Ireland. If you do not succeed, the time has not yet come for the shaking off the dust of your feet, though meanwhile you must preach the gospel for a testimony against them.

And one thing more, methinks the men at arms felt," We are on the spot when anything does occur." As they went round the wall, they said, "It stands strong and stern, but it will yield, and then we are all ready when the breach is made." You do not know what God may have in store for Ireland, or for any nation. According to the law which seems to regulate human society, there comes every now and then a great change. Who would have dreamed of the convulsions of 1848 that thrones would have been so unsettled, and that crowns would fall from monarchs' heads. Such convulsions may come again, nay, unless the course of nature is changed, must come. Then we are ready; we stand watching for the gap. O God, in thine eternal providence he pleased now, even now, to send a convenient season, but if not, we will have the men ready when thy appointed time shall come. It was a grand thing when the earthquake came to shake the prison of Philippi, that there should be a Paul and a Silas there ready to preach the sermon to the trembling jailor and his household, and so when the earthquake comes to Ireland, as it will come, we shall have a Paul and a Silas there. We may have many such, I trust; the more the better, who shall be ready to stand up with, "Thus saith the Lord!" Why what cannot God do? Has not he lately given you an instalment of what he can accomplish, in the revival which seemed to shake the North of Ireland? It is true it occurred in a part where Romanism is less strong; but the same power which can move the stolidity of Protestantism, can stir the fiery zeal of what is genuine religion in its way- I mean genuine, though mistaken, because like Paul they think they do God service. The hearty spirit of the Irishman with his popery, may certainly be reached by divine omnipotence, as well as the soul of the Irishman of the North with his much colder creed. Let us have hope, and go on compassing the city, not changing anything

that is right, and not neglecting that which is according to Scripture, but waiting till the time shall come.

Now upon this, I think I shall say no more, except again to ask friends practically to carry it out. Let us try and wait-wait patiently- not wait idly, but continue your subscriptions, continue your prayers, continue your interest in the Society, for God would have you wait.

**III.** And, thirdly, God would have his people WIN.

I shall not say much about this. We will postpone that till the time when it occurs, and then we shall not need to have any sermons about it, but can all come together, and hold a meeting to praise and bless God. Only let us say that if the analogy is carried out according to the siege of Jericho, the victory is very sure, and, when it comes forth, very complete. Nothing could be more so. It may be very sudden also, and it 'will be very glorious. But we shall get nothing by it, for when Jericho fell, nobody gained anything except to offer it unto the Lord; so that we have to persevere in disinterested service, just toiling on for the Master, remembering that when success comes, it will all be his- every single atom of it-the glory will be to him, and not to us, and he will take care to send the success in such a manner that nobody shall be able to say, "Glory be to the Irish Society." Nobody shall be able to say, "Well done, Baptist denomination;" no single minister or Evangelist shall be able to say, "Well done, myself;" but the one shout that shall go up to heaven, will be "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

I have thus spoken for the Society. I was asked to preach for it, and I am obliged I think to preach with a text that bears somewhat on the subject. I observe, many sermons that are preached for Societies might just as well be preached any other day of the week before any other assembly on any other occasion. I do not know that is exactly what is wanted; so if we have not dived deep into the doctrines of everlasting love, if we have not taken you to the Savior's cross, and offered you the invitations of the gospel, if we have not done this and fifty thousand other things, there is a time for every purpose under heaven; and to every one there is a season, and if we can keep the constituency of this Society working and waiting, and make it in this way to come to be among the winning, we shall rejoice exceedingly. Brethren, let us begin to carry out the sermon now by our contributions; let us begin to do so by our prayers; let us act out the spirit of it by trying to

tell others what the gospel is. Be this the motto of us all:-"Now will I tell to sinners round,

*What a dear Savior I have found;  
 "Point them to the redeeming blood,  
 And cry, 'Behold the way to God.'"*

Yet I dare not sit down till I say to every soul here, and especially to you who cannot take an interest in God's work because you are not saved yourself, remember we do not ask you to save and look after the souls of Irishmen. Your own soul must be the first concerned; and the way of salvation is simply this-

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He it is who stands in the gap, and makes an atonement for sin. Take Christ to be your atonement, your justifier, your salvation, and your all; and believing in him you are saved. This is your duty and must not be postponed any longer. You must begin the work at home. Enlist on the side of Israel by following Israel's leader. Our heavenly Joshua is the Son of God, believe on him and you shall find salvation through his blood, and acceptance before God through Christ. Then go out to be the means of saving others, and God speed you through his blessed Spirit. Amen.

# THE HOLY SPIRIT COMPARED TO THE WIND.

NO. 630

BY C. H. SPURGEON

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” — John 3:8.

AT the present moment, I am not able to enter fully into the subject of the new birth. I am very weary, both in body and mind, and cannot attempt that great and mysterious theme. To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven, and it is not the time to preach upon regeneration when the head is aching, nor to discourse upon the new nature when the mind is distracted. I selected my text with the intention of fixing upon one great illustration, which strikes me just now as being so suggestive, that with divine assistance, I may be able to work it out with profit to you, and ease to myself. I shall endeavor to bring before you the parallel which our Savior here draws, between the wind and the Holy Spirit. It is a remarkable fact, known I dare say to most of you, that both in the Hebrew and Greek languages the same word is used for spirit and for wind, so that our Savior as it were rode upon the wings of the wind, while he was instructing the seeking Rabbi in the deep things of God; he caught at the very name of the wind, as a means of fastening a spiritual truth upon the memory of the enquirer, hinting to us that language should be watched by the teacher, that he may find out suitable words, and employ those which will best assist the disciple to comprehend and to retain his teaching. “The wind,” said he, “bloweth,” and the very same word would have been employed if he had meant to say, “The Spirit bloweth where he listeth.” There was intended, doubtless, to be a very close and intimate parallel between the Spirit of God and the wind, or otherwise the great ruler of providence, who invisibly controlled the confusion of Babel, would not

have fashioned human language so that the same word should stand for both. Language, as well as nature, illustrates the wisdom of God.

It is only in his light that we see light: may the Holy Spirit be graciously pleased to reveal himself in his divine operations to all our waiting minds. We are taught in God's Word that the Holy Spirit comes upon the sons of men, and makes them new creatures. Until he enters them they are "dead in trespasses and sins." They cannot discern the things of God, because divine truths are spiritual and spiritually discerned, and unrenewed men are carnal, and possess not the power to search out the deep things of God. The Spirit of God new-creates the children of God, and then in their new-born spirituality, they discover and come to understand spiritual things, but not before; and, therefore, my beloved hearers, unless you possess the Spirit, no metaphors however simple can reveal him to you. Let us not mention the name of the Holy Spirit without due honor. For ever blessed be thou, most glorious Spirit, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and with the Son; let all the angels of God worship thee! Be thou had in honor, world without end!

### **I. We will consider IN WHAT SENSE THE HOLY GHOST MAY BE COMPARED TO THE WIND.**

The Spirit of God, to help the spiritually minded in their study of his character and nature condescends to compare himself to dew, fire, oil, water, and other suggestive types; and among the rest, our Savior uses the metaphor of wind. What was the first thought here but that of mystery? It was the objection on the score of mystery which our Lord was trying to remove from the mind of Nicodemus. Nicodemus in effect said, "I cannot understand it; how can it be? a man born again when he is old, created over again, and that from an invisible agency from above? How can these things be?" Jesus at once directed his attention to the wind, which is none the less real and operative because of its mysterious origin and operation. You cannot tell whence the wind cometh: you know it blows from the north or from the west, but at what particular place does that wind start on its career? Where will it pause in its onward flight? You see that it is blowing to the east or to the west, but where is its halting-place? Whence came these particles of air which rush so rapidly past? Whither are they going? By what law are they guided in their course, and where will their journey end? The gale may be blowing due east here, but it may be driving west a hundred miles away. In one district the wind may be rushing from the

north, and yet not far from it there may be a strong current from the south. Those who ascend in balloons tell us that they meet with cross currents; one wind blowing in this direction, and another layer of air moving towards an opposite quarter; how is this? If you have watched the skies, you must occasionally have noticed a stream of clouds hurrying to the right, while higher up, another company is sailing to the left. It is a question whether thunder and lightning may not be produced by the friction of two currents of air travelling in different directions; but why is it that this current takes it into its head to go this way, while another steers for quite another point? Will they meet across each other's path in regions far away? Are there whirlpools in the air as in the water? Are these eddies, currents, rivers of air, lakes of air? Is the whole atmosphere like the sea, only composed of less dense matter? If so, what is it that stirs up that great deep of air, and bids it howl in the hurricane, and then constrains it to subside into the calm? The philosopher may scheme some conjecture to prove that the "trade winds" blow at certain intervals because of the sun crossing the equator at those periods, and that there must necessarily be a current of air going towards the equator because of the rarefaction; but he cannot tell you why the weathercock on yonder church steeple turned this morning from south-west to due east. He cannot tell me why it is that the sailor finds that his sails are at one time filled with wind, and in a few minutes they fall loosely about, so that he must steer upon another tack if he would make headway. The various motions of the air remain a mystery to all but the infinite Jehovah. My brethren, the like mystery is observed in the work of the Spirit of God. His person and work are not to be comprehended by the mind of man. He may be here to-night, but you cannot see him: he speaks to one heart, but others cannot hear his voice. He is not recognizable by the unrefined senses of the unregenerate. The spiritual man discerns him, feels him, hears him, and delights in him, but neither wit nor learning can lead a man into the secret. The believer is often bowed down with the weight of the Spirit's glory, or lifted up upon the wings of his majesty; but even he knows not how these feelings are wrought in him. The fire of holy life is at seasons gently fanned with the soft breath of divine comfort, or the deep sea of spiritual existence stirred with the mighty blast of the Spirit's rebuke; but still it is evermore a mystery how the eternal God comes into contact with the finite mind of his creature man, filling all heaven meanwhile, and yet dwelling in a human body as in a temple-occupying all space, and yet operating upon the will, the judgment, the mind of the poor insignificant creature called man. We may enquire, but



who can answer us? We may search, but who shall lead us into the hidden things of the Most High? He brooded over chaos and produced order, but who shall tell us after what fashion he wrought? He overshadowed the Virgin and prepared a body for the Son of God, but into this secret who shall dare to pry? His is the anointing, sealing, comforting, and sanctifying of the saints, but how worketh he all these things? He maketh intercession for us according to the will of God, he dwelleth in us and leadeth us into all truth, but who among us can explain to his fellow the order of the divine working? Though veiled from human eye like the glory which shone between the cherubim, we believe in the Holy Ghost, and therefore see him; but if our faith needed sight to sustain it, we should never believe at all.

Mystery is far from being all which the Savior would teach by this simile. Surely he meant to show us that the operations of the Spirit are like the wind for divinity. Who can create a wind? The most ambitious of human princes would scarcely attempt to turn, much less to send forth the wind. These steeds of the storm know no bit nor bridle, neither will they come at any man's bidding. Let our senators do what they will, they will scarcely have the madness to legislate for winds. Old Boreas, as the heathens called him, is not to be bound with chains and welded on earthly anvil, or in vulcanian forge. "The wind bloweth where it listeth;" and it does so because God directeth it and suffereth it not to stay for man, nor to tarry for the sons of men. So with the Spirit of God. All the true operations of the Spirit are due in no sense whatever to man, but always to God and to his sovereign will. Revivalists may get up excitement with the best intentions, and may warm peoples' hearts till they begin to cry out, but all this ends in nothing unless it is divine work. Have I not said scores of times in this pulpit, "All that is of nature's spinning, must be unravelled?" Every particle which nature puts upon the foundation will turn out to be but "wood, hay, and stubble," and will be consumed. It is only "the gold, the silver, and the precious stones" of God's building that will stand the fiery test. "Ye must be born again from above," for human regenerations are a lie. Thou mayest blow with thy mouth and produce some trifling effects upon trifles as light as air; man in his zeal may set the windmills of silly minds in motion; but, truly, to stir men's hearts with substantial and eternal verities, needs a celestial breeze, such as the Lord alone can send. Did not our Lord also intend to hint at the sovereignty of the Spirit's work? For what other reason did he say, "The wind bloweth where it listeth?" There is

an arbitrariness about the wind, it does just as it pleases, and the laws which regulate its changes are to man unknown. "Free as the wind," we say, — "the wild winds." So is the mighty working of God. It is a very solemn thought, and one which should tend to make us humble before the Lord—that we are, as to the matter of salvation, entirely in his hand! If I have a moth in my hand to-night, I can bruise its wings, or I can crush it at my will, and by no attempts of its own can it escape from me. And every sinner is absolutely in the hand of God, and, let him recollect, he is in the hand of an angry God, too. The only comfort is, that he is in the hand of a God who for Jesus' sake, delights to have mercy upon even the vilest of the vile. Sinner, God can give thee the Holy Spirit if he wills; but if he should say, "Let him alone," thy fate is sealed; thy damnation is sure. It is a thought which some would say is "enough to freeze all energy." Beloved, I would to God it would freeze the energy of the flesh, and make the flesh stick dead in the sense of powerlessness; for God never truly begins to show his might till we have seen an end of all human power. I tell thee, sinner, thou art as dead concerning spiritual things as the corpse that is laid in its coffin, nay, as the corpse that is rotting in its grave, and has become like Lazarus in the tomb, stinking and offensive. There is a voice that can call thee forth out of thy sepulcher, but if that voice come not, remember where thou art—justly damned, justly ruined, justly cut off for ever from all hope. What sayest thou? Dost thou tremble at this? Dost thou cry, "O God! have pity upon me?" He will hear thy cry, sinner, for there never yet was a sincere cry that went up to heaven, though it were never so feeble, but what it had an answer of peace. When one of the old saints lay dying, he could only say, "O Lord, I trust thee languida fide," with a languid faith. It is poor work that, but, oh! it is safe work. You can only trust Christ with a feeble faith; if it is such a poor trembling faith that it does not grip him, but only touches the hem of his garment, it nevertheless saves you. If you can look at him, though it be only a great way off, yet it saves you. And, oh what a comfort this is, that you are still on pleading terms with him and in a place of hope. "Whosoever believeth is not condemned." But, oh, do not trifle with the day of grace, lest having frequently heard the warning, and hardened thy neck just as often, thou shouldst "suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy;" for if he shut out, none can bid thee come in; if he do but put to the iron bar, thou art shut out in the darkness of obstinacy, obduracy, and despair for ever, the victim of thine own delusions. Sinner, if God save thee; he shall have all the glory, for he hath a

right to do as he will, for he says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

But still I think I have not yet brought out what is in the text. Do you not think that the text was intended to show the varied methods in which the Spirit of God works in the conversion and regeneration of men? "The wind bloweth where it listeth." Now, observe the different force of the wind. This afternoon the wind seemed as if it would tear up every tree, and doubtless, had they been in leaf, many of those noble princes of the forest must have stretched themselves prone upon the earth; but God takes care that in these times of boisterous gales there should be no leaf, and therefore the wind gets but little purchase with which to drag up a tree. But the wind does not always blow as it did this afternoon. On a summer's evening there is such a gentle zephyr that even the gnats who have been arranging a dance among themselves are not disturbed, but keep to their proper places. Yea, the aspen seems as if it could be quiet, though you know it keeps for ever quivering, according to the old legend, that it was the tree on which the Savior hung, and therefore trembles still as though through fear of the sin which came upon it. 'Tis but a legend. There are times when all is still and calm, when everything is quiet, and you can scarcely detect the wind at all. Now, just so it is with the Spirit of God. To some of us he came like a "rushing mighty wind." Oh, what tearings of soul there were then! My spirit was like a sea tossed up into tremendous waves; made, as Job says, "To boil like a pot," till one would think the deep were hoary. Oh, how that wind came crashing through my soul, and every hope I had was bowed as the trees of the wood in the tempest. Read the story of John Bunyan's conversion: it was just the same. Turn to Martin Luther: you find his conversion of the same sort. So might I mention hundreds of biographies in which the Spirit of God came like a tornado sweeping everything before it, and the men could not but feel that God was in the whirlwind. To others he comes so gently, they cannot tell when first the Spirit of God came. They recollect that night when mother prayed so with brothers and sisters, and when they could not sleep for hours, because the big tears stood in their eyes on account of sin. They recollect the Sunday-school and the teacher there. They remember that earnest minister. They cannot say exactly when they gave their hearts to God, and they cannot tell about any violent convictions. They are often comforted by that text, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see;" but they cannot get any farther: they sometimes wish they could. Well, they need not wish it, for the Spirit of

God, as a sovereign, will always choose his own way of operation; and if it be but the wind of the Holy Spirit, recollect it is as saving in its gentleness as in its terror, and is as efficient to make us new creatures when it comes with the zephyr's breath as when it comes with the hurricane's force. Do not quarrel with God's way of saving you. If you are brought to the cross be thankful for it, Christ will not mind how you got there. If you can say "He is all my salvation, and all my desire," you never came to that without the Spirit of God bringing you to it. Do not therefore think you came the wrong way, for that is impossible.

Again, the wind not only differs in force, but it differs in direction. We have been saying several times the wind is always shifting. Perhaps there never were two winds that did blow exactly in the same direction. I mean that if we had power to detect the minute points of the compass, there would be found some deviation in every current, although, of course, for all practical purposes, it blows from certain distinct points which the mariner marks out. Now, the Spirit of God comes from different directions. You know very well, dear friends, that sometimes the Spirit of God will blow with mighty force from one denomination of Christians; then on a sudden they seem to be left, and another body of Christians God will raise up, fill with himself, and qualify for usefulness. In the days of Wesley and Whitefield, there was very little of the divine Spirit anywhere, except among the Methodists. I am sure they have not a monopoly of him now, The divine Spirit blows also from other quarters. Sometimes he uses one man, sometimes another. We hear of a revival in the North of Ireland, by-and-by it is in the South of Scotland. It comes just as God wills, for direction; and you know, too, dear friends, it comes through different instrumentalities in the same Church. Sometimes the wind blows from this pulpit: God blesses me to your conversion. Another time it is from my good sister, Mrs. Bartlett's class; on a third occasion it is the Sunday-school; again, it may be another class, or the preaching of the young men, or from the individual exertion of private believers. God causes that wind to blow just which way he wills. He works also through different texts of Scripture. You were converted and blessed under one text: it was quite another that was made useful to me. Some of you were brought to Christ by terrors, others of you by love, by sweet wooing words. The wind blows as God directs. Now, dear friends, whenever you take up a religious biography, do not sit down and say, "Now I will see whether I am just like this person." Nonsense! God never repeats himself. Men make steel pens-thousands of grosses of

them.- all alike, but I will be bound to say that in quills from the common, there are no two of them precisely the same. If you look, you will soon discover that they differ in a variety of ways. Certain gardeners cut their trees into the shape of cheeses and a number of unnatural forms, but God's trees do not grow that way, they grow just anyhow- gnarl their roots and twist their branches. Great painters do not continually paint the same picture again, and again, and again, and my Divine Master never puts his pencil on the canvas to produce the same picture twice. Every Christian is a distinct work of grace on God's part, which has in it some originality, some portion distinct from all others. I do not believe in trying to make all history uniform. It is said that Richard III. had a hump-back. Whether he really was deformed, or whether history gave him the bump-back, I cannot tell, but it is said, that all his courtiers thought it was the most beautiful hump-back that ever was seen, and they all began to grow hump-backs too; and I have known ministers who had some peculiar idiosyncrasy of experience which was nothing better than a spiritual hump-back; but their people all began to have hump-backs too-to think and talk all in the same way, and to have the same doubts and fears. Now that will not do. It is not the way in which the Most High acts with regard to the wind, and if he chooses to take all the points of the compass, and make use of them all, let us bless and glorify his name. Are not the different winds various in their qualities? Few of us like an east wind. Most of us are very glad when the wind blows from the south. Vegetation seems to love much the south-west. A stiff north-easter is enough to make us perish; and long continuance of the north, may well freeze the whole earth; while from the west, the wind seems to come laden with health from the deep blue sea; and though sometimes too strong for the sick, yet it is never a bad time when the west wind blows. The ancients all had their different opinions about wind; some were dry, some were rainy, some affected this disease, some touched this part of men, some the other. Certain it is that God's Holy Spirit has different qualities. In the Canticles he blows softly with the sweet breath of love turn on farther, and you get that same Spirit blowing fiercely with threatening and denunciation; sometimes you find him convincing the world "of sin, of righteousness, of judgment," that is the north wind; at other times opening up Christ to the sinner, and giving him joy and comfort; that is the south wind, that blows softly, and gives a balminess in which poor troubled hearts rejoice; and yet "all these worketh the self-same Spirit."

Indeed, my subject is all but endless, and therefore I must stay. But even in the matter of duration you know how the wind will sometimes blow six weeks in this direction, and, again, continue in another direction. And the Spirit of God does not always work with us: he does as he pleases; he comes, and he goes. We may be in a happy hallowed frame at one time, and at another we may have to cry, "Come from the four winds, O breath!"

## II. We will consider in the second place, THE PARALLEL BETWEEN THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE EFFECTS OF THE WIND.

"Thou hearest the sound thereof." Ah, that we do! The wind sometimes wails as if you could hear the cry of mariners far out at sea, or the moanings of the widows that must weep for them. And, oh! the Spirit of God sets men wailing with an exceeding bitter cry for sin, as one that is in sorrow for his first-born, "Thou hearest the sound thereof." Oh, it is a blessed sound, that wailing! Angels rejoice over "one sinner that repenteth." Then comes the wind at another time with a triumphant sound, and if there be an AEolian harp in the window, how it swells, sweeps, descends, then rises again, gives all the tones of music, and makes glad the air with its jubilant notes. So with the Holy Spirit; sometimes he gives us faith, makes us bold, full of assurance, confidence, joy and peace in believing. "Thou hearest the sound" of a full diapason of the Holy Spirit's mighty melody within the soul of man, filling him with peace and joy, and rest, and love. Sometimes the wind comes, too, with another sound as though it were contending. You heard it, perhaps, this afternoon. We who are a little in the country hear it more than you do: it is as though giants were struggling in the sky together. It seems as if two seas of air, both lashed to fury, met, and dashed against some unseen cliffs with terrible uproar. The Spirit of God comes into the soul sometimes, and makes great contention with the flesh. Oh, what a stern striving there is against unbelief, against lust, against pride, against every evil thing.

"Thou hearest the sound thereof." Thou that knowest what divine experience means, thou knowest when to go forth to fight thy sins. When thou canst hear "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees," then thou dost bestir thyself to smite thy sins. Sometimes the wind comes with a sweep as though it were going on for ever. It came past, and dashed through the trees, sweeping away the rotten branches, then away across the Alps, dashing down an avalanche in its course, still onward; and as it flew, it bore away everything that was frail and weak, and on, on, on it sped its

way to some unknown goal. And thus it is sometimes the Spirit of God will come right through us, as if he were bearing us away to that spiritual heritage which is our sure future destiny-bearing away coldness, barrenness, everything before it. We do not lament then that we do not pray, we do not believe that we cannot pray; but "I can do everything," is our joyful shout as we are carried on the wings of the wind. "Thou hearest the sound thereof." I hope you have heard it sometimes in all its powerful, overwhelming, mighty influence, till your soul has been blown away. "Thou hearest the sound thereof."

But then the wind does something more than make a sound; and so does the Holy Spirit. It WORKS and produces manifest results. Just think what the wind is doing to-night. I cannot tell at what pitch it may be now. It is just possible that in some part of the ocean a vessel scuds along almost under bare poles; the mariners do their best to reef the sails: away she goes: now the mast is gone: they do their best to bear up, but they find that in the teeth of the gale they cannot stand; the ship dashes on the rocks, and she is wrecked. And, oh! the Spirit of God is a great wrecker of false hopes and carnal confidences. I have seen the Spirit of God come to a sinner like a storm to a ship at sea. He had to take down the top-gallants of his pride, and then every thread of carnal confidence had to be reefed, and then his hope itself had to be cut away; and on, on the vessel went, until she struck a rock, and down she went. The man from that time never dared trust in his merits, for he had seen his merits wrecked and broken in pieces by the wind. The wind, too, recollect, is a great leveller. It always aims at everything that is high. If you are down low in the street, you escape its fury; but climb to the top of the Monument, or St. Paul's, and try whether you do not feel it. Get into the valley, it is all right. The lower branches of the trees are scarcely moved, but the top branches are rocked to and fro by it. It is a great leveller; so is the Holy Spirit. He never sees a man high but he brings him down. He makes every high thought bow before the majesty of his might; and if you have any high thought to-night, rest assured that when the Spirit of God comes, he will lay it low, even with the ground. Now, do not let this make you fear the Holy Spirit. It is a blessed thing to be rocked so as to have our hopes tested, and it is a precious thing to have our carnal confidences shaken. And how blessedly the wind purifies the atmosphere! In the Swiss valleys there is a heaviness in the air which makes the inhabitants unhealthy. They take quinine, and you see them going about with big swellings in their necks. From Martigny to Bretagne, there is a

great valley in which you will see hundreds of persons diseased. The reason is, that the air does not circulate. They are breathing the same air, or some of it, that their fathers breathed before them. There seems to be no ventilation between the two parts of the giant Alps, and the air never circulates; but if they have a great storm which sweeps through the valleys, it is a great blessing to the people. And so the Spirit of God comes and cleanses out our evil thoughts and vain imaginations, and though we do not like the hurricane, yet it brings spiritual health to our soul.

Again the wind is a great trier of the nature of things. Here comes a great rushing up the street, it sweeps over the heaps of rubbish lying in the road, away goes all the light chaff, paper, and other things which have no weight in them; they cannot stand the brunt of its whirling power; but see, the pieces of iron, the stones, and all weighty things are left unmoved. In the country you will often see the farmer severing the chaff from the wheat by throwing it up into a current of air, and the light husks all blow away, while the heavy wheat sinks on the heap, cleansed and purified. So is the Holy Ghost the great testing power, and the result of his operations will be to show men what they are. Here is a hypocrite, he has passed muster hitherto, and reckons himself to be a true and genuine man, but there comes a blast from heaven's mighty spirit, and he finds himself to be lighter than vanity: he has no weight in him, he is driven on and has no rest, can find no peace, he hurries from one refuge of lies to another. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Thus also we try the doctrines of men, we bring the breath of inspiration to bear upon them: do they abide time test, or are they driven away? Can you hold that truth in the presence of God? Can you cling to it and find it stable in the hour of trial? Is it a nice pleasant speculation for a sunny day when all is calm and bright, or will it bear the rough rude blast of adversity, when God's Holy Spirit is purifying you with his healthful influence? True Christians and sound doctrines have ballast and weight in them, they are not moved nor driven away, but empty professors and hollow dogmas are scattered like chaff before the wind when the Lord shall blow upon them with the breath of his Spirit. Examine yourselves therefore, try the doctrines and see if they be of God. "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." Have root in yourselves, then will you not wither in the hot blast, nor be driven away in the tempestuous day.

Is not the Spirit moreover like unto the wind in its developing of character. See the dust is lying all over the picture, you cannot see the fair features of the beauteous sketch beneath; blow off the dust, and the fine colors will be



seen, and once more the skill of the painter will be admired. Have you never noticed some piece of fine mosaic, or perhaps some well cut engraving on metal, all hidden, and the fine lines filled up with dust? You have blown off the accumulation, and then you could admire the work. So does the Spirit of God. Men get all covered with dust in time hot dusty roadside of life till they are nearly the color of the earth itself; but they come to the hill-top of Calvary, and here they stand till the wind of heaven has cleansed them from all the dust that has gathered around their garments. Oh, there is nothing like communion with the Spirit of God to counteract the earthly tendencies of a business life. There are some men that get covered with a yellow dust, till they are almost hidden by it; they can talk of nothing else but money. Gold, gold, gold, is getting to occupy nearly every thought now, I have no quarrel with money in its right place, but I do not like to see men live in it. I always try to drive away that mean and grovelling spirit which lives for nothing else but to accumulate money, but I cannot always succeed. Now the Spirit of God will make a man see his folly and put his money into its right position, and place the graces of the Christian character where men can see them and glorify God in them. Never let your business character or professional skill dim and hide your Christianity. If you do, God's Spirit will come to brighten you up, and he will have no mercy on these, but will, in love to your soul, cleanse and give lustre to God's work which is wrought in you. I have also noticed how helpful the wind is to all who choose to avail themselves of it. In Lincolnshire, where the country is flat and below the level of the sea, they are obliged to drain the land by means of windmills, and hundreds of them may be seen pumping up the water so as to relieve the land of the excess of moisture. In many parts of the country nearly all the wheat and corn is ground by means of the wind. If it was not then for the wind, the inhabitants would be put to great inconvenience. The Spirit of God is thus also a mighty helper to all who will avail themselves of his influences. You are inundated with sin, a flood of iniquity comes in; you can never bale out the torrent, but with the help of God's Spirit it can be done. He will so assist, that you shall see the flood gradually descending and your heart once more purified. You need ever to ask his help; fresh sin, like falling showers, will be poured into you by every passing day, and you will need a continuous power to cast it out; you may have it in God's Spirit; he will with ceaseless energy help you to combat against sin, and make you more than a conqueror. Or, on the other hand, if you need some power to break up and prepare for you your spiritual food, you will find no better help than

what God's Spirit can give. In Eastern countries they grind corn by the hand, two sitting at a small stone mill; but it is a poor affair at best; so are our own vain attempts to prepare the bread of heaven for ourselves. We shall only get a little, and that little badly ground. Commentators are good in their way, but give me the teaching of the Holy Ghost. He makes the passage clear and gives me to eat of the finest of the wheat. How often we have found our utter inability to understand some part of divine truth; we asked some of God's people and they helped us a little, but after all, we were not satisfied till we took it to the throne of heavenly grace, and implored the teachings of the blessed Spirit; then how sweetly it was opened to us; we could eat of it spiritually. It was no longer husk and shell, hard to be understood; it was as bread to us, and we could eat to the full. Brethren, we must make more use of the wisdom which cometh from above, for the Spirit like the wind, is open to us all, to employ for our own personal benefit. I see also here a thought as to the co-operation of man and the Spirit in all Christian work. It has pleased God to make us co-workers with him, fellow laborers, both in the matter of our own salvation, and also in the effort to benefit others. Look for a moment at you stately hark, she moves not because of her sails, but she would not reach the desired haven without them. It is the wind which propels her forward; but the wind would not act upon her as it does, unless she had the rigging all fixed, her masts standing, and her sails all bent, so as to catch the passing breeze. But now that human seamanship has done its best, see how she flies! She will soon reach her haven with such a favoring gale as that. You have only to stand still and see how the wind bears her on like a thing of life. And so it is with the human heart. When the Spirit comes to the soul that is ready to receive such influences, then he helps you on to Christian grace and Christian work, and makes you bear up through all opposition, till you come to the port of peace, and can anchor safely there. Without him we can do nothing; without us he will not work. We are to preach the gospel to every creature, and while one plants, and another waters, God adds the increase. We are to work out our own salvation, but line worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. We must go up to possess the goodly land with our own spear and sword; but the hornet goes before us to drive out the foe. Jericho shall he captured by a divine and miraculous interference, but even there rams' horns shall find a work to do, and must be employed. The host of Midian shall be slain, but our cry is, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." We give God all the glory, nevertheless we use the means. The water of Jordan must he sought out, and used by all

who desire a cleansing like Naaman the Syrian. A lump of figs must be used if other Hezekiahs are to be healed; but the Spirit is, after all, the great Cleanser and Healer of his people Israel. The lesson is clear to all: the wind turns mills that men make; fills sails that human hands have spread; and the Spirit blesses human effort, crowns with success our labors, establishes the work of our hands upon us, and teaches all through, that “the hand of the diligent maketh rich;” but “if a man will not work, neither shall he eat.”

Another thought suggests itself to my mind in connection with the wind and human effort; it is this: How completely dependent men are upon the wind as to what it shall do for them. They are entirely at its mercy as to its time of blowing, its strength, and the direction it will take. I have already dwelt upon this thought of the sovereignty of the wind, but it comes up here in a more practical form. The steamer now can steer almost anywhere they please, and at all times it will proceed on its voyage; but the sailing-ship must tack according to the wind, and when becalmed must wait for the breeze to spring up. The water-mill and steam-mill can be worked night and day, but the mill that depends upon the wind must abide by the wind's times of blowing, and must turn round its sails so as to suit the direction of the current of air. In like manner we are compelled to wait the pleasure of the Spirit. There is no reservoir of water which we can turn on when we will, and work as we please. We should forget God far more than we do now if that were the case. The sailor who is depending on the wind, anxiously looks up to the masthead to see how the breeze is shifting and turning round the vane; and he scans the heavens to see what weather he is likely to have. He would not need to care nearly so much as he does now that he is absolutely dependent on the wind if he had steam-power, so as to sail in the very teeth of the storm if he so willed. God, then, keeps us looking up to heaven by making us to be completely at his mercy as to the times and ways of giving us his helping-power. It is a blessed thing to wait on God, watching for his hand and in quiet contentment leaving all to him. Brethren, let us do our part faithfully, spread every sail, make all as perfect as human skill and wisdom can direct, and then in patient continuance in well-doing, wait the Spirit's propitious gales, neither murmuring because he tarries, nor be taken unawares when he comes upon us in his sovereign pleasure to do that which seemeth good in his sight.

Now, to-night I have only given you some hints on this subject: you can work it out for yourselves. As you hear the wind you may get more

sermons out of it than I can give you just now. The thing is perfectly inexhaustible; and I think the business of the minister is not to say all that can be said about the subject. Somebody remarked concerning a certain minister, that he was a most unfair preacher, because he always exhausted the subject and left nothing for anybody else to say. That will never be said of me, and I would rather that it should not. A minister should suggest germs of thought, open up new ways, and present, if possible, the truth in such a method as to lead men to understand that the half is not told them.

And now, my dear hearer, whether you listen often to my voice, or have now stepped in for the first time I would like to ring this in your ear, Dost thou know the Spirit of God? If ye have not the Spirit, ye are none of his. “Ye must be born again.” “What, Lord-’ must?” Dost thou not mean ‘may?’” No, ye must. “Does it not mean, ‘Ye can be?’” No, ye must. When a man says, “must,” it all depends upon who he is. When God says, “must,” there it stands, and it cannot be questioned. There are the flames of hell: would you escape from them? You must be born again There are heaven’s glories sparkling in their own light, would you enjoy them?-you must be born again. There is the peace and joy of a believer, would you have it?-you must be born again. What, not a crumb from off the table without this? No, not one. Not a drop of water to cool your burning tongues except you are born again. This is the one condition that never moves. God never alters it, and never will. You must, must, MUST. Which shall it be? Shall your will stand, or God’s will? O, let God’s “must” ride right over you, and bow yourselves down, and say, “Lord, I must, then I will; ah! and it has come to this-I must to-night.

‘Give me Christ, or else I die.’ I have hold of the knocker of the door of thy mercy, and I must, I WILL get that door open. I will never let thee go except thou bless me. Thou sayest must, Lord, and I say must too.”

“Ye must, ye must be born again.” God fulfill the “must” in each of your cases, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

# THE BELIEVER SINKING IN THE MIRE.

NO. 631

BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink.” — Psalm 69:14.*

MANY rivers, and especially the Nile, have on their banks deep deposits of black mud, and when any person seeks to leap on shore, if he should ignorantly or through misfortune spring upon this soft mud he would, unless speedily pulled out, be sucked under until he was utterly swallowed up and suffocated in the mire. Having no handhold or foot-hold, the more he labored to extricate himself from the thick adhesive mud, the deeper he would descend until he would be choked in the filth, unless some one was near to help him out, and save him from destruction. True believers, beloved, are sometimes in deep mire, and in fear of being swallowed up. This was the state and condition of the Psalmist when he wrote this psalm. He felt that he was sinking and could not deliver himself, and therefore he cries unto the strong for strength in the words of the text “Deliver me out of the mire and let me not sink.” Mr. Gadsby, in his “Wanderings,” narrates an incident, which, with reflections of his own, I shall read to you at the outset. “Being brought to a stand as just mentioned, I hailed the reis to heave to, and take me on board. One of the men was, therefore, sent in the small boat, but the river near the western side was so shallow that he could not get the boat within some distance of the bank. He consequently, as is usual in such cases, jumped overboard that he might carry me to the boat on his back. No sooner, however, had he sprung from the boat than I heard him scream. I turned to see what was the matter, when I found him struggling in the mud. He was sinking as though in a quicksand; and the more he struggled the faster and deeper he sank. His fellow-boatmen were not slack: they quickly saw the dilemma he was in, and two of them dashed in and swam to the small boat. I was almost choked with terror, and I

breathed, or rather gasped with difficulty. "Can they reach the poor fellow?" I said to myself. "If not, he must inevitably be swallowed up alive!" — Now they reach the boat! Now they near him! And now, praise the Lord, he grasps firmly hold-O that death-like grasp! — of the side of the boat! But this was not until he had sunk up to his bosom. Seeing him safe, I breathed more freely; and I feel that now, though only relating the circumstance, the excitement has caused an increased and painful action of the heart. How I thought of poor David! Had he really witnessed a similar scene to this literally, when, speaking of the feelings of his soul spiritually, he said, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me?" (Psalm lxi. 2.) O what an agonizing state to be in! and yet many of my readers, I have no doubt, who never witnessed such a scene literally, know something about it spiritually, as David did, whether he had seen it with his bodily eyes or not. Well might he, in the struggling of his soul, exclaim, "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink!" (14.) Let me grasp firmly hold of the ark, and be pulled safely on board! Well! just at the right time, just before the poor fellow's arms (shall I say his arms of faith?) were disabled, swallowed up, deliverance came.

The prayer of our text leads us to three reflections: first, that the true believer may be in the mire, and very near sinking secondly, that the true believer may be in such a condition that God alone can deliver him; and thirdly. that in whatever condition the believer may be, prayer is evermore his safe refuge: if a man find that his own strength fails he can look up to Him who is an ever present help in time of trouble and cry unto Him "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink."

## **I.** We commence with the statement, that THE TRUE BELIEVER MAY BE IN THE MIRE.

Let us consider for a moment what kind of mire the believer may be brought into, and why God suffers him to be brought there, and how we can prove that he is really and truly a believer in the truth, although God suffers him to be brought into the mire.

The truest believer in the world may be brought into the deep mire of unbelief. Some of us who have preached the word for years, and have been the means of working faith in others, and of establishing them in the knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, have nevertheless been the subjects of the most fearful and violent doubts as to the truth of

the very gospel we have preached. Times may have occurred to the best of God's servants, when they have even doubted the existence of the God whom they have loved to serve, when even the Deity and reality of the Lord Jesus who has rescued them from sin by his precious blood, has been a matter of grievous and horrible questioning. Little do people know, who are ignorant of the private history of God's believing people, what struggles they have with their own base-born, wicked unbelief. It is not alone Thomas who has said, "Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," but there have been thousands of eminent saints who have been attacked by unbelief, and have been in doubt as to things which they once received as certain verities, and which still in their heart of hearts they know to be true. They could have died for those truths one day, they could have established them beyond all cavil and question the next, and yet upon the third they are compelled through strong temptation to sit down, and with the tears streaming from their eyes, to cry bitterly unto their Strong Helper, "Oh, God, save me from this accursed unbelief which robs me of every comfort, takes the foundations away, and lays my glory in the dust! What can I do? If the foundations be removed, what can the righteous do? O settle my soul upon thy word, and establish me in thy truth, O thou God of truth." A man may be a true believer, and yet feel that he is sinking fast into the mire and clay of unbelief as some of us know to our lamentation and dismay.

A believer may be quite settled in his belief of the gospel, and may never doubt the inspiration of Scripture, the atonement of Christ, and all those precious truths which are commonly received among us, and yet, through sin or temptation, or some other cause, he may not have a full assurance of his own interest in those glorious and vital truths. A true believer in Christ, in fact, may often suspect himself to be a hypocrite when he is most sincere; to be an apostate when he is most diligently following the Lord; and he may set himself down as the chief of sinners, when the testimony of men and of God is, that he is a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil." A believer may be in a state of high spiritual health, and yet may think himself to be sick unto death. He may be clothed in fair white linen, and yet reckon himself to be naked, poor, and miserable. He may be rich with all the treasures of his heavenly Father's kingdom, and yet may scarcely know where he can find a ready crust with which to supply his present pressing spiritual wants. There are such things as princes in rags; and there have been such things, and probably are now, as princes

of the blood royal-peers of God's own realm-sitting on the dunghill. Many a justified and accepted saint has had to moan out under a deep sense of sin, just as the poor publican did, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I dare say, many of you think that God's ministers never have any question about their interest in Jesus Christ. I wish they never had: brethren, I wish sincerely I never had. It is seldom that I do-very seldom: but there are times when I would change my soul's place with the meanest believer out of heaven, when I should be content to sit behind the door of heaven, if only I might be numbered among God's people. True believers sometimes droop into this state: whether they are God's people or not, they cannot tell; whether their sins are forgiven or not is a matter of solemn enquiry with their souls; whether they have ever passed from death unto life or no is the great problem which they sit down and earnestly consider; and whether they be God's people or not, is a question they have great difficulty in answering. This is deep mire, indeed; for it is woe with another woe at its heels to lose the assurance of one's present salvation.

In addition to this, at times, the Lord's chosen are brought into another kind of mire, which will never swallow them up, but which may prove a matter of very severe trial to them while they are in it, I mean temporal trouble. When the soul is alarmed about spiritual things, and bodily or pecuniary troubles come also, then the sea is boisterous indeed. It is ill when two seas meet; when Moab and Ammon come against Judah at the same time; when both upper and nether springs appear to be dried up; when God, with both hands thrusts us into the deep mire. Certain of my brethren are frequently in trouble. Their whole life is a floundering out of one slough of despond into another. You have had many losses in business-nothing but losses perhaps;-you have had many crosses, disappointments, bereavements; nothing prospers with you. Well, brother, there is this consolation, that you are one of a numerous family, for many of God's people pass through just such tribulation. It was said by Matthew Henry, I think, that "Prosperity was the blessing of the old covenant, but that adversity is the peculiar blessing of the new." I do not know whether that is true or not, but I do know this, that Christ has said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but he of good cheer; I have overcome the world." It is no sign, beloved, that you are not a child of God, because you feel the rod, but it is rather a token of your being one of the adopted, because you are made to pass under the rod of the covenant, and to utter the prayer of David: "Lord, save me from the deep mire, and let me not sink." You are allowed



to plead against the thing you so much fear; you may cry, "Leave me not to become penniless; leave me not to dishonor my character," but remember that none of your trials can prove you to be a lost man. Pray, brother, the prayer of that good man who asked for neither poverty nor riches; ask that you may have food convenient for you; pray, "Give me this day my daily bread." "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink."

I have not come to the blackest mire yet. God's own people are at seasons suffered to sink in the mire of inward corruption. There are times when believers have such a sight of the little hell within their own hearts that they are ready to despair of the possibility of their being completely sanctified and made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Our God at seasons permits the fountains of the great deep of human depravity to be broken up, and then what floods of sin come pouring forth! We little know what lies secreted in our deceitful hearts,—envyings, blasphemies, murders, lust: there is enough in the heart of any man to make a full-grown devil, if restraining grace did not prevent. To-day you may have had such enjoyments of the Lord's countenance that you have been ready to sing: "Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; I shall never be moved;" and yet to-morrow you may have such a sight of self that you may exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Remember if you have the nature of God in you, you have also the nature of the old Adam. You are one with Christ, and "as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly;" but you are one with Adam, and "as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy." You are to be immortal, but you are to be reminded that you are mortal; you are one day to be raised in glory, but you are to remember, as long as you are here, that the time of glory is not come, for you drag about to your shame, your weakness, your dishonor, and your misery a body of sin and death. The best of God's children know this; and I think the holier they are, the more likely they are to feel the conflict within. It is the fashion in our country for men to wear black coats; I suppose it is because they do not shew the dirt so much as a white garment, but if we wore white garments the filth would reveal itself, and we should have to change them very often. So, my brethren, the more a Christian is like his Master, the more clearly he sees his own faults. Oh, Lord, grant us grace to see much of our sins through the tears of repentance, and to see much of the Savior through the eye of faith; for if we see little of him, we shall get into the plight of David when

he was in the deep mire, and cried, “Lord, deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink.”

Beloved, it is painful to reflect that the best of God’s people are suffered to fall into the mire of Satanic temptations. There is no knowing what suggestion Satan may thrust into the ear and into the soul of the greatest believer that heaven ever made. God may whisper in your ear one day, and Satan the next, and yet you may be a child of God on both occasions. Oh, beloved, I dare scarcely say in the midst of this assembly what I know on this point. If I were only to reveal my own struggles and conflicts with Satan, I might stagger some of you; but this I know, that no Christian minister will ever be able to enter into the trials and experiences of God’s people, unless he has stood foot to foot with the arch fiend, and wrestled with the prince of hell. Martin Luther was right when he said that temptation and adversity were the two best books in his library. He had never written his commentary upon the Galatians if he had not been one who was frequently tempted and tossed about by Satan. That fiery, vehement nature of his, was like a great coal fire burning up the works of Satan, and all that Satan could do only stirred up the flame and caused it to burn more brightly. Satan will suggest not merely little sins, but the worst and foulest of sins to the best of God’s chosen people, he will even venture in his baseness to urge the man of God to destroy himself when under depression of spirits; and although the saint hates the very thought, yet he may be driven to the verge of it by an influence which he feels that all his puny might is unable to resist. It is a fearful thing to fight with Apollyon. We shall sing of it in heaven as one of the greatest and most marvellous mercies of God, that “He delivered us out of the mouth of our cruel adversary.”

**2.** Why is it that believers are suffered to fall into it? The answer is, they sometimes get into it through their own sin. It is a chastisement upon them. They were not faithful enough when they walked in the light, and, therefore, they are put into the darkness. If they had minded their steps when they were going down the hill they would not have been subject to such afflictions in the valley. Rest assured that a great many of our sorrows are the foul weeds which spring up from the seeds of our own sins. If thou hadst been a fruitful tree, the pruning-knife would not have been so often used. The rod is never taken down from the shelf, except when it is absolutely wanted; and we are made to smart so bitterly under it, because we so greatly require it. God does not punish in a penal sense, but he does

chastise; and he generally does it by permitting us to be filled with our own ways. We have to drink the powder of the idol calf which we have ourselves set up. We had need to walk with holy jealousy, for we serve a jealous God. O for grace to serve him well.

Our heavenly Father sends these troubles, or permits them to come, to try our faith. If our faith be worth anything at all, it will stand the test. Gilt is always afraid of fire, but gold is not: the paste gem dreads to be touched by the diamond, but the true diamond fears no test. People who have a kind of confectionery godliness will wish to be preserved from temptations, for they cannot endure them; but the Christian counts it all joy when he falls into divers trials, knowing that "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." My dear friends, if your faith is only a sunshiny faith, get rid of it, for you may not have many bright days between this and heaven. If your godliness can only walk with Christ when he wears silver slippers you had better give it up, for Christ very often walks bare-foot. It is a poor faith which can only trust God when friends are true, the body full of health, and the business profitable; but that is true faith which holds by the Lord's faithfulness, when friends are gone, when the body is sick, when our spirits are depressed, when we are driven from the enjoyment of assurances into the desert land, and cannot see the light of our Father's countenance. A faith that can say in the midst of the direst trouble, "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," this is heaven-born faith indeed. I believe in my Lord, because he is a God that cannot lie, faithful and true to his every word, and, therefore, let the whole creation go to rack and ruin, my faith shall not waver or give up its confidence.

The Lord may also let his servants slip into the deep mire to glorify himself, for he is never, perhaps more glorified than in the faith of his own people. When an architect has erected a bridge of whose enormous strength he is well satisfied, he has no objection that it shall be put to any test. "No," says he, "let the heaviest train pass over it which has ever been dragged by a locomotive; let the most terrible tempest come that has ever blown from the four winds, I have built my structure in a manner so substantial that, the more it is tried and proved, the more you will admire its firmness and completeness. So our gracious God, beloved, glorifies himself by permitting his people to be subjected to trials and by enabling them to endure the strain. We should never know the music of the harp if the

strings were left untouched; we should never enjoy the juice of the grape if it were never trodden in the wine-press; we should never discover the sweet perfume of cinnamon if it were not pressed arid beaten; and we should never know the warmth of lire if the coals were not utterly consumed. The excellence of the Christian is brought out by the fire of trouble. The wisdom of the Great Workman and the glory of his skill and power are discovered by the trials through which his vessels of mercy are permitted to pass.

Again, beloved, trials are doubtless permitted to shew the natural weakness of the creature, that no flesh may glory in the presence of God. Men of iron nerve are raised up to face all opposition and confront the powers of darkness; their testimony never falters, their course is true and bright as the sun in the heavens, and amen rejoice in their light. With faith undaunted they beard the infernal lion in his den, and in the day at battle seek the thickest of the fight. All the devils in hell cannot affright them, and all the foes upon earth cannot stir them from their divine purpose. They win souls as many as the sands of the sea, and their spiritual children are for number, like the gravel thereof. They revive the flame which lingers in the embers of the church, they set the world on a blaze with heavenly fire, they comfort many and set free thousands of prisoners, and yet, on a sudden, and it may be in the last hour, their joy departs, their assurance flees and their confidence departs. May not this be needful that men may not trace the champion's noble bearing to the strength of his natural constitution, but discern that the eternal God was the support of his faith. We might have dreamed that the successful warrior was something different from other men, but when he is brought low, we discern clearly, that it was distinguishing grace rather than a distinguished man which is to be seen and wondered at. The man was but an 'earthen vessel in which God had put his precious treasure, amid he makes the earthiness of the vessel manifest, that all men may see that the excellency of the power is not of us, but of God.

There is, perhaps, another reason why God permits his people to sink for a time into deep depression, viz., to make heaven sweeter when they enter its pearly gales. There must be some shades in the picture to bring out the beauty of the lights. Could we be so supremely blessed in heaven if we had not known the curse of sin and the sorrow of earth. Rest, rest, rest; in whose ear does that sound most sweetly? Not in the ears of the loiterers who scorn all knowledge of the word "toil," but in the ears of those who are exhausted and fatigued by the labors of the day. Peace! Is there a man

in England who knows the blessedness of that word peace? Yes, there are some. The soldier knows it. He has heard the whizz of the bullet, he has seen the smoke of time battle and the garment stained with blood, and his heart has been stirred by the din; and the shrieks and the death of the field of fight; to him peace is a peerless boon. Who will know the peace of heaven but those who have experienced the warfare of earth and have endured conflicts with sin and the prince of the power of the air? Beloved, there must be the foil of sorrow to bring out the bright sparkling of the diamond of glory. The happiest moments of mere physical pleasure I can remember, have been just after a long illness, or some acute pain. When pain is lulled to sleep, how happy one is! I saw a brother the other day affected by the most painful of all bodily complaints. He was telling me of the sufferings he had endured, and he said, "I am so happy now it is all over." And I suppose, my beloved, that heaven will derive some of its excess of delights, its overflowing joy from the contrast with the pain and misery, and conflict, and suffering, which we have had to pass through here below. There will be something better to talk about than troubles in heaven but the recollection of them may afford a flavour to our happiness, which it would have lacked without it. We shall, I doubt not, "with transporting joys, recount the labors of our feet."

**3.** These are some of the reasons why God permits his people to sink for a while in the deep mire, where there is no standing. But the question is raised, "Are these men who are thus tossed about by doubts and vexed with the great depravity of their hearts, truly at that time God's people?" Certainly they are; for if they were not God's people the pain of the temptation which they endure could not have reached them. This spot is the spot of God's children, and none others are marked with it. The man who lives in sin as his element, never feels the weight of it. A fish may be deep in the sea, with thousands of tons of water rolling over his head, but it does not feel the load; but, if a man has only a bucketful of water to carry upon his head, he feels the weight of it, and rejoices to lose his burden. The sinner whose element is sin, laughs at the weight by which a believer is borne down. Conflicts and pains, such as I have been speaking of, are not possible to those destitute of spiritual life. Spiritual life is the first requisite for spiritual grief and spiritual contrition. Depend upon it, beloved, that those who suffer as I have described, are the children of God, for they shew it. They shew it by the way in which they bear their trials; for, in their worst times there is always a clear distinction, which marks them as

separate from other men. If they cannot shout “victory,” they bear patiently. If they cannot sing unto God with their mouth, yet their hearts bless him. There is a degree of light even in their worst darkness; it never becomes Egyptian darkness; some one star at least gilds the gloom. There is still a candle somewhere or other for the Lord’s chosen, in the blackest night. If they get into the mire, they do not perish there; they cry for help when their woes surround them, and in the very nick of time when everything appears to be lost, their heavenly Father hastens to their aid.

It is well known to the students of Christian biography, that the most eminent of God’s saints have had to pass through trials similar to those which we have been describing. Luther was a man of the strongest faith, and yet at times of the faintest hope. He was, and he was not, a firm believer. His faith never wavered as to the truth of the cause which he advocated; but his faith as to his own interest in Christ, seldom, if ever, amounted to full assurance. The force of his faith spent itself in carrying on with fearful vigor the war against antichrist and error of all shapes. He believed the truth, and held right manfully justification by faith; but he was at times very doubtful as to whether he himself was justified in Christ Jesus. He believed in salvation by the precious blood of Christ; but, especially at the last, it became a very serious matter with him as to whether he had ever been washed in that precious blood. Roman Catholic biographers,-who, of course, if they can, will slander him,-say, that he had doubts as to everything which he preached, and that at the last, he found his faith was not in accordance with truth. Not so; no man stuck to his testimony with more tenacity than the great reformer; but yet I marvel not that they should say so. He never doubted the truth of the things which he preached; but he did doubt his own interest in them frequently; and when he came to die, his testimony, though amply sufficient, was nothing like so brilliant as that of many a poor old woman who has died in a humble cottage, resting upon Jesus. The poor peasant who knew no more than her Bible true, was utterly unknown to the Vatican, and Fame’s trumpet will never resound her name, but yet she entered into eternal peace with far louder shoutings of joy than Martin Luther, who shook the world with his thundering valor.

“Here lies he that never feared the face of man,” is a most proper epitaph for John Knox; and yet at the last for some hours he passed through fearful temptation. And what do you suppose it was? The temptation of self-righteousness. The devil could not charge him with sin; for Knox’s life had

been so straightforward and honest, that no man could impugn his motives or deny his Christianity; and, therefore, the devil came to him in another and more crafty way. He whispered, "John Knox, thou hast deserved well of thy Master; thou wilt get to heaven well enough through thine own merits." It was as hard a struggle as the lion-hearted soldier of the cross could well have to hold to his simple faith in Jesus Christ in his hour of peril. Now, no Christian man denies that Luther and Knox were men of faith; and yet they were men who had to pray, "Deliver me out of the mire." I know as I look around on this congregation, that some of you can heartily sympathize in the truth before us; but if there be no other here who can, I can most thoroughly, "I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day;" but I know also that the Christian life is one of stern conflict and battle; and though we do rejoice in the Lord always, yet there are times when it is as hard work as we can possibly do, nay, harder work than we can accomplish without the help of the Eternal Spirit, to keep our faith alive at all, for our souls are brought almost to death's door. I wished to enlarge on this matter for the comfort of those who are tossed to and fro by doubts and fears, I have been attempting to describe the case of those who, for the greater part of their lives have lived in the shade, and seen but little of the light of God's countenance. O may the sun shine on them yet with cheering rays.

## **II.** I turn very briefly to the second point, — WHEN BELIEVERS ARE IN SUCH A STATE, THEY KNOW EXPERIMENTALLY THAT NO ONE CAN DELIVER THEM BUT THEIR GOD

The Word of God itself, if not laid home by the divine Spirit, cannot help them. You may possibly be in such a condition that every promise scowls at you as though it were transformed into a threatening. When you turn over the pages of the book once so full of comfort to you, it seems withered into a howling wilderness. Even those promises which you have been wont to offer to others in their time of need, appear to shut their doors against you. "No admittance here," says one promise. Unbelief puts its burning finger right across another. Past sin accuses you and cries, "You cannot claim this word, for your transgression has forfeited it." So you may look through the whole book and find nothing upon which your souls may fasten. You have noticed strong posts by the sides of rivers to which ships may be safely moored To get the rope fairly round one of the promises of God will yield good enough moorings for a Christian; but there are times

when we have great difficulty in getting the rope round so as to hold fast; the fault is not in the promise but in us. At such seasons, the preaching of the gospel is apparently without power. You say to yourselves, "I do not know how it is, but I do not profit by the ministry as I once did. It used to make me leap for joy when I heard of the precious things of God, but I come away uncomfited from that table which once furnished me a feast of consolation." It is not the fault of the minister, he still as a good steward brings forth things new and old; it is not the fault of the Word, it is still milk for babes, and strong meat for full-grown men, but you painfully feel that you are changed, for you lament in words like these, "I go where others go, and find no comfort there." This is a case in which the Holy Spirit must himself exercise his comforting office, it is only by the effectual application of the Word to your heart by the Holy Spirit that you can be brought out of this deep mire.

At such times, other believers cannot aid you. Those about you can prove to you how foolish it is to be in such a state, and you can even see your folly for yourself, yet you lie there helpless to lift hand or foot. They tell you of the faithfulness of God; they remind you of the glorious future and point to the land beyond the skies; but you only sigh, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove that I might fly away and be at rest, for there is no rest for me beneath the sky." Human sympathy is at a non plus, and all we can do is to weep with you, for we cannot stay your tears. Why does our gracious God permit this? Perhaps it is because you have been living without him and now he is going to take away every thing upon which you have been in the habit of depend- mini and the second cause may be, that he wishes to drive you to himself Ohm, it is a blessed thing to live it the fountain head while our skin-bottles are full, we are content like Haggar and Ishmael to go into time wilderness; but when those are dry nothing will serve us but "Thou God seest me." We must then come to the well. We are like the prodigal, we love the swine-troughs and forget our father's house.

Remember, we can make swine-troughs and husks even out of the forms of religion. Do not misunderstand me. They are blessed things, but we may put them in God's place amid then they are of no value Any- thing becomes an idol when it keeps us away from God; even time brazen serpent is to be despised as Nehustan. a mere piece of brass if I worship it instead d of God. Time prodigal was never safer than when he was driven to his father's bosom, because he could find sustenance nowhere else. And, brethren, I think our Lord favors us with a famine in the hand that it may



make us seek alter the Savior more. The best position for a Christian is living wholly and directly on God's grace. The best position is still to be where he was at first, "Having nothing and yet possessing all timings." Not building up a wooden house on the rock, piling it higher and higher with our own faggots, and then getting g up at the top and saying, "How high I am!" but having no wood and no faggots at all, but just keeping down on the hare, solid rock; this is wisdom. When the wind comes and the storm blows, we shall see that the ricketty structures which we build will give way and fall to our own damage; but if we stand on the rock which never shakes, we cannot suffer loss. I pray God that you and I may never get beyond the fountain filled with blood. Stand there brother and be happy. Sinners blood-washed, sinners pleading, sinners accepted, we would always feel ourselves to be. Never get for a moment to think that our standing is in our sanctification, our mortification, our graces, or our feelings, but know that because Christ on Calvary offered a full, free, efficacious atonement for every one that believeth on him, therefore, we are saved; for we are complete in him, having nothing of our own to trust to, but resting upon the merits of him whose passion and whose life furnish for us the only sure ground of confidence. Beloved, when we are brought to this then it is that God comes to help us. We are sure in our poverty to turn to him afresh with new earnestness. Infants when they are among strangers, are pleased with little toys and amusements, but when they become hungry, nothing will do for them but their mother's breast; so it is with a child of God, he may for a time be satisfied and find pleasure in the things of this world, but he only finds hasting and sure happiness in being embraced in his Father's arms. When the boys walk out with us in fair weather they will run in front of us ever so far, but as soon as they see any danger in the way they quickly return to father's side; so when every thing goes well with us we frequently run a long way from God, but as soon as we are overtaken by trouble, or see a lion in the way, we fly to our heavenly Father. I bless God for the mire, and for my sinking in it, when it makes me cry out, "Deliver me, oh my God, out of the deep mire, and let me not sink."

III, In the last place, our text shows us that PRAYER IS THE NEVER FAILING RESORT OF THE CHRISTIAN in any case, in every plight.

When you cannot use your sword you may take to the weapon of all-prayer. Your powder may be damp, your bowstring may be relaxed, your sword may be rusty, your spear may be bent, but the weapon of all-prayer

is never out of order. Men have to sharpen the sword and the spear, but prayer never rusts. There is this blessed thing about prayer, it is a door which none can shut. Devils may surround you on all sides, but there is always one way open, and as long as that road is unobstructed, you will not fall into the enemy's hand. We can never be taken by blockade, escalade, mine or storm, so long as heavenly succours can come down to us by Jacob's ladder to relieve us in the times of our necessities. Prayer is never forbidden. Remember, Christian, never is it wrong for you to pray, for the gates of heaven are open night and day. Your prayer is heard in heaven in the dead of the night, in the midst of your business, in the heat of noon-day, or in the shades of evening. You cannot be in any condition of poverty, or sickness, or obscurity, or slander, or doubt, or even sin, but still it is true that your God will welcome your prayer at any time and in every place.

Again, prayer is never futile. True prayer is evermore true power. You may not always get what you ask for, but you shall always have your real wants supplied. When God does not answer his children according to the letter, he does so according to the spirit. If thou askest for silver wilt thou be angered because he gives thee gold? If thou seekest bodily health, shouldst thou complain if instead thereof he makes thy sickness turn to the healing of spiritual maladies? Is it not better to have the cross sanctified than to have the cross removed? Was not the apostle more enriched when God suffered him still to endure the thorn in the flesh, and yet said to him, "My strength is sufficient for thee?" Better to have all sufficient grace than to have the thorn taken away. What is your condition my brother, my sister? Let me entreat you not to cease from prayer. There may be spiritual life in you, and yet the devil may tempt you to say, "I cannot pray." But you can pray; you do pray; you must pray. If you have spiritual life, although you can scarcely bend your knee, and are almost afraid to utter words once dear to you, yet your soul desires, pants, hungers, thirsts, and that is the essential of prayer, that is the very marrow and essence of prayer. Sobs and looks are prayers; and though you say you cannot pray, you must pray, you cannot help praying if you are a Christian. "I cannot breathe," that might be true in a certain sense; I cannot, perhaps, breathe under an asthmatic affection without great difficulty and much pain, but I must really breathe if I live; and so with you. You must breathe if you live; and you do pray, must pray, if you are truly a child of God. At any rate I pray thee by the power of God the Holy Spirit to break through those evils, those nets of

the devil which hold you in bondage, and begin with your whole soul to pray. Never mind what form your prayer takes, but do pray. My dear brother, everything depends now upon thy prayer. If Satan can stop thy prayer, he has stripped thee of thy last resort, thy last hope. He will take thee by storm if thou shalt leave off praying. Pray, if it costs thee thy life, pray. Go not to thine ease, and take not thy rest until thou hast prayed. Give no sleep to thine eyes till thou hast prayed. Slumber not until thou hast had dealings with God in prayer. Not pray! are you willing to be damned? Not pray! are you willing to make your bed in hell? Not pray! shall devils be your companions? Shall heaven's gate be shut against you? Not pray! why, my brother you must pray now. Oh, send up the prayer from the very bottom of your heart: "O God, deliver me out of the deep mire, and let me not sink. Save me, oh, my God. God be merciful to me a sinner." May God the Holy Spirit sweetly compel you to pray! May he incline, guide, direct, and instruct you how to pray, that this very night you may offer up a prayer which God in his great goodness will hear and answer! Pray: "Lord, my soul is besieged. I am shut up by my sins. Oh, God, raise the siege, and deliver me from the enemy. Lord, help me with thine Almighty arm. Make my extremity thy opportunity. I am a foul beggar sitting on a dunghill; Lord, come and lift me up, and put me among the princes, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever." May the blessed virgin's song be yours. "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek; he hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away;" and may you find in the goodness, and mercy, and loving kindness of God, a speedy deliverance out of the deep mire, that you may not sink! May God give a blessing to these words, to your comfort! I know some of you will say, "I am not in such a state." Thank God that you are not. Be grateful for thy mercies, lest thou lose them. Be thankful for thy full assurance and thy comfortable hope, lest those favors should become dim, like dying tapers and waning moons. Rejoice now, oh Christian, as the young man does in his youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in thy youthful joy; but, remember, if thou art not careful how thou walkest in these flowery paths, if thou become too confident in thine own strength or goodness, God will bring thee down, and make thee cry out as sharply and as sorrowfully as David:—"Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink."

# CONSIDER BEFORE YOU FIGHT.

NO. 632

**PREACHED AT THE METROPOLITAN  
TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON.*

“What king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.” — Luke 14:31, 32.

EVERY sensible man endeavors to adapt his purposes to his strength. He does not begin to build a house which he will not be able to finish, nor commence a war which he cannot hope to fight through. The religion of Christ is the most reasonable one in the world, and Jesus Christ never desires to have any disciples who shall blindly follow him without counting the cost. We always esteem it to be a happy thing when we can get men to sit down and consider. The most of you are so full of other thoughts, so occupied with the world, ever running hither and thither about your ordinary business, that we cannot get you to think, or calmly sit down, and soberly look at things as in the light of eternity, and weigh them deliberately as you ought. And yet it is only reasonable that the Master should ask of you to do for him with regard to your own spiritual matters, what you will admit that every sensible man does in his business continually. You are poor traders if you never have any stock-takings: you are likely to be ere long in the bankruptcy court if there is no periodical examination of accounts; and so Christ would have you sit down sometimes, and take stock, as to where you are, and what you are, and then to figure up by some sort of arithmetic by which you may come to a truthful calculation, what you are able to do, and what not to do, and what therefore it is reasonable for you to undertake, and what unreasonable, and where your position ought, and where it ought not to be.

I especially invite this evening, those who are unconverted in this assembly, to some few thoughts upon the war in which they are engaged with God, hoping that peradventure if they consider a little upon it, they will send an ambassage, and desire peace. When I have spoken upon that, there will be some, perhaps, who will be running away with the idea that they will at once be at peace with God, and make war with Satan; but I shall want to pin them down a moment, and make them estimate their chances of victory in such a war as that, and see whether they are able to meet the black prince of darkness in their own strength. We will try if we cannot make it to-night the subject of a little homely talk about our souls, and a little earnest personal consideration about our future.

**I.** First, then, THERE ARE SOME HERE WHO ARE 'NOT THE FRIENDS OF GOD, and in this ease he that is not with him is against him.

If you cannot look up to God, and say, "My Father," and feel that your heart beats true to him, then remember it is a fact that you are his enemy. If you could have what you wish there would be no God. If it were in your power you would never trouble yourself again with thoughts of him. You would like to live, you say, as you list, and I know how you would list to live. It would be anyhow, rather than as God commands. Now, as you are engaged in antagonism with him, just think awhile- Can you expect to succeed? Are you likely to win the day? You have entered into a conflict with his law; you do not intend to keep it; with his day, you do not regard it; you are thus at war with God. Now, is it likely that you will be successful? Is there a chance for you? If there be, why then, perhaps, it may be as well to go on. If you can conquer him, if the battlements of glory may yet see the flag of sin waved triumphant there, why, man, then try it. There will be at least an ambition worthy of Satan who desired sooner to reign in hell than to be ruled by heaven. But is there any hope for you? Let me put a few things before you which may, perhaps, make you think the conflict too unequal and thus lead you to abandon the thought at once.

Think of God's stupendous power! What is there which he cannot do? We see but little of God's power comparatively in our land. Now and then there comes a crash of thunder in a storm, and we look up with amazement when he sets the heavens on a blaze with his lightning. But go, and do business on the deep waters; let your vessel fly before the howling hurricane; mark how every staunch timber seems to crack as though it were but match-board, and the steady mast goes by the board, and snaps,

and is broken to shivers. Mark what God does when he stirs up the great deep, and seems to bring heaven down, and lift the earth up till the elements mingle in a common mass of tempest. Then go to the Alps, and listen to the thunder of the avalanche. Stand amazed, as you look down some grim precipice, or peer with awe-struck wonder into the blue mysteries of a crevasse; see the leaping cataracts, and mark those frozen seas, the glaciers, as they come sweeping down the mountain side; stay awhile till a storm shall gather there, and Alp shall talk to Alp, and those white prophetic heads shall seem to bow while the wings of tempest cover them! There you may learn something of the power of God amidst the crash of nature. If you could have stood by the side of Dr. Woolfe, when rising early one morning, he went out of Aleppo, and upon turning his head, saw that Aleppo was no more, it having been in a single moment swallowed up by an earthquake, then again you might see what God can do. But why need I feebly recapitulate what you all know so well? Think of what that Book records of his deeds of prowess, when he unloosed the depths, and bade the fountains of the great deep be broken up, that the whole world that then was, might be covered with water. Think of what he did at the Red Sea, when the depths stood upright as an heap for a time, while his people went through, and when afterwards with eager joy the floods clasped their hands, and buried the foemen in the deep, never to rise again! Let such names as Og, king of Bashan, Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Sennacherib, the mighty, rise before your recollection, and mark what God has done! Who has ever dashed upon the bosses of his buckler without being wounded? What iron has he not broken? What spear has he not shivered? Millions came against him, but by the blast of the breath of his nostrils they fell, or they flew, like the chaff before the wind. Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof but the rocks stand still, and hurl off the waves in flakes of foam, and so doth God, when his foes are most enraged, and passionate. He that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh; the Lord doth have them in derision; and he breaketh them in pieces without a stroke of his hand, or even the glance of his eye. Think, sinner, think, of him with whom thou contendest. Hast thou an arm like God's? Canst thou thunder with a voice like his? Canst thou stamp with thy foot, and shake the mountains? Canst thou touch the hills, and make them smoke? Canst thou say to the sea, "Be stirred to thy depths," or canst thou call to the winds, and bid the steeds of tempest be unloosed? If thou canst not, then think of the battle! Attempt to do no more but hie thee back to thy bed, and there

commune with thine heart, and make thy peace with him, against whom thou canst not hope successfully to contend.

Think, again, O rebellious man, you have to deal not only with almighty, but with an ever encompassing power. Please to think how much you are in God's power to-night as it regards your temporal position. You are prospering in business; but the tide of prosperity may be turned in a way unknown to you. God has a thousand ways of stripping those whom he aforesaid seemed to clothe most lavishly. You doat upon that wife of yours: she may be smitten before your eyes, and waste with consumption or decline, or, more rapidly still, she may be taken from you at a stroke, and then where is your joy? Those children, those happy prattlers who make glad your hearth; could you hold them for a moment, if God should call back their spirits? If he said, "Return ye children of men," your prayers, the physician, your love- what could all these avail you? You have but to buy the coffin, and the shroud, and the grave, and bury your dead out of your sight. God can sweep away all, if he will, and leave you penniless, childless, a widower, without comfort in the world. I would not contend with him who has so many ways to wound me. I am vulnerable at so many points, and he knows how to pierce me to the quick in them all. I will, therefore, make him my friend rather than my foe. I had better not strive with him who has the key of the postern, and of the front gate, and of the iron gate, and who can storm every position along my bastion whenever he shall please.

Think, again, how much you are personally in his band! You are strong you say; you will do a day's work with any man; there are few can lift a load more readily than you can perhaps, and yet one second would be enough to paralyse every limb. Your faculties are clear; you can write with perspicuity, no one can see through an intricate account more rapidly than you can, or find out a secret more speedily; and yet one tick of that clock is time enough to reduce either you or me to a drivelling idiot, or to a raving madman. A mysterious hand falls on that brain, and cools it, so that there is no longer the light of intellect within it, or else an awful breath fans its flame, till it burns like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, and the soul walks within it a martyr, doomed to live in the midst of fire. Think of this-not many yards from here there stands in Bedlam an awful proof of what the Providence of God can do in one moment with those who seemed the most sane, the most witty, and the most able of men; and you have not to go far in either direction, before at the gate of some hospital, you will find how

soon the body may become very, very low, even to the dust, if God but will it. I would not, O sinner, I would not have God other than my friend, while I am thus helplessly in his control. If the moth is in my hand, and I can crush it at my will and pleasure, surely if that moth had wit and sense, it would not provoke me to anger, nor seek to bring down my plagues upon it, but, if it could, it would seek to nestle near my heart, that I, so able to crush it, might use my power for its protection, and might make what wit I have to be its wisdom for its shelter and defense.

It is well also to remember the mighty army of the Lord of Hosts, and that you live amidst the creatures of God who all are ready to do his bidding. As the children of Israel journeyed in the wilderness, they were preserved by God from many foes and innumerable dangers which lurked around, waiting to destroy them. Once God gave the fiery serpents permission to assault the host, and what death and terror immediately filled the camp! They must have seen then, that it was no small thing to be at variance with God, when he had so many allies waiting to do his bidding. How clearly this was shown in the plagues of Egypt, when frogs, locusts, and lice, hail and fire, plague and death, flooded the ill-fated land, when beckoned on by the uplifted finger of God. He can still call to his help the forces of creation. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera, and God can still make all things work for evil as well as good, if he be pleased to command them. When Herod strove with God, he was smitten of worms and died, and God has still a countless army of servants who do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. You had better wait awhile and think how you can meet them. Are your friends as numerous? Can you muster an army like unto God's? Is the muster-roll of your hosts like unto his? Consider the heavens, for he marshalleth you starry multitude and calleth them all by names; because he is great in strength, not one faileth. Be wise and enter into covenant with him through blood, and rush not on to certain defeat by seeking to outrival God.

Remember moreover what is the extent of God's wisdom, and that his foolishness is greater than your highest knowledge. A good general is worth more than a regiment of men. When Stonewall Jackson was killed, his enemies and friends alike felt that his death was more than the loss of ten thousand men. Our Iron Duke, when alive, was a strength to our army beyond all calculation. Now mark the skill and infinite wisdom of the God who leads the army of the skies. All light and knowledge are his. He is the Ancient of days, and his experience runs back to all eternity. You are but



of yesterday and know nothing. His plans are beyond your conception, but he knoweth the way you take. He is far above your thoughts and ever out of your sight; but he can see you through and through, and knoweth you better than you know yourself. Do not show your folly by weighing your wisdom against his in the scales, or by expecting to outshine him so as to triumph over him. Poor moth rushing into the flame, you will be consumed amidst the pity of good men and the derision of evil ones.

Yet there is another matter I want you to recollect, you that are the enemies of God—that you have a conscience. You have not got rid of it yet. You have a thief in that candle of the Lord it is true, but still it is alight. It is not put out; and God has ways of making it to become a terrible plague to you, if you do not accept it as a friend. Conscience is meant to be man's armor-bearer, beneath whose shield he may fight the battles of the right, but if you make it your enemy, then conscience often places a sword in such a way as to cut and wound you severely. You have a conscience, and that is a very awkward thing for a man to have who is an enemy of God. If I were God's enemy, I should prefer having no monitor to call my attention to the holy character and righteous law of the Most High; I should be glad to get rid of every particle of moral sense. But you have consciences, and most of you are not yet dead to all feeling of guilt and shame, you cannot, therefore, sin so cheaply as others; and if you do for the present manage to put Mr. Conscience down, yet since he is still in you, the time will come when you will find his voice grow louder, and there will be a terror in that voice which will make it a terror for you to sleep, and hard for you to go about your daily business with your accustomed regularity. Those men who serve God most faithfully, yet find that their conscience, when it can accuse them of anything wrong, though it is their best friend, is no very pleasant companion. It is said that David's heart smote him. I would sooner have anybody smite me than my own heart, for it strikes with so hard a blow, and hits the place where one may most tenderly feel it. And it will be so with you unless you get your "conscience seared with a hot iron." I am afraid there will come a time when you will not rest in your beds, nor be able anywhere to find peace or satisfaction. I think therefore, if I had a friend of God inside my heart, I would not like to fight with God, so long as he continued within me. Oh, that you would be at peace with him, "and thereby good shall come unto you."

One other reflection, for I must not keep you thinking on this point long, it is this. Remember you must die, and therefore, it is a pity to be at enmity

with God. You may put it off, and say, "I shall not die yet;" but you do not know. How can you tell? It is possible that you may die to-morrow. But suppose that you live for the next twenty or thirty years; why what is that? I am only some thirty years of age, and yet I confess that I never thought time so short as I feel it to be now. When we were children, we thought twelve months a great length of time; when we were twenty, a year seemed to be a very respectable period; but now it flies, and some of my friends here, whose hair is turning grey, will tell you that whether it is fifty, sixty, or seventy years, it all seems but a mere dream, a snap of the finger, it is gone so soon. Well, just push through a little interval of time, then you must die. My dear friend, will it not be a very dreadful thing to die when you are at war with God? If you could fight this out for ever under such circumstances as those in which you now are, I could not then commend the struggle, but since it must come to such an awful pause, since there must be that death-rattle in your throat, since there must be that clammy sweat upon your brow, O you will want some better business than to be carrying arms against the God of heaven in your dying moments. They that have God for their friend, yet find death no very pleasant task, but what will you find it, who will have to strike yourselves in every blow that you are aiming against the Most High, whom you have made, and continue to make your enemy.

Here is this, too, to think of, there is a future state, so that when you die, you have to live again. We know very little about that next state, and I do not intend to say much about it to-night. You are launched without your body, an unclothed spirit, into a world which you have never seen. Will you find companions there, or will you be alone? Where will it be? What sort of place will it be like? I should not choose to enter upon the realm of spirits without having God to be my friend; for it were a dreadful thing to get into that mysterious unknown country, having nothing to take with me across its bourne except this, — an inveterate enmity to the King that reigns supreme in it. If I must cross the border, and go into a land I have never trodden, I would like, at least, to carry a passport with me, or to be able to say, "I am a friend of the King that reigns here;" but to go there as God's enemy—why how terrible it must be!

Besides, let me say, you cannot hope to succeed, all experience is against you; there never was one yet, that either in this state or the next has fought with God, and conquered, and you will not be the first; for they who contend with God all come to this one conclusion: "He comes forth in his

strength, and his enemies are given like stubble to the fire, and like wax to the flame: he lifteth up his voice, and they melt away: he looks at them, and that one flash of fire withers them for ever, and out of the bottomless pit of despair they weep and wail the piteous but useless regret, that their harvest is past, and their summer is ended, and that they are not saved; for they have spent their strength against their God, and so have brought themselves where ruin is eternal, and hope can never come." Oh that thou wouldst send an ambassage, and be at peace!

Methinks, I hear some say, "Well, we wish to give up the contest; but what is to be done, so as to be at peace with God?" I ask, Have you got an ambassador to go to God for you? That is the first thing. He cannot look at you. Jesus Christ is the Ambassador between God and man: can you commit your case into his hand? Will you do so? If so, your case will speed well. God cannot deny him any request. He has a right to all he ever asks the Father to give, and the Father is always well pleased in him, and delighteth to grant him whatever he desires. That Savior is willing to plead your cause. He waiteth to be gracious. I am sent to tell you the good news of his love and mercy; to warn you of the certain doom which awaits all who turn from Christ; and to bid you and every sin-sick rebel to come at once, just as you are, to the footstool of mercy; and I can pledge the honor of God, (as being Christ's ambassador for this purpose,) that if you come, he will in no wise cast you out. And the terms of peace are very brief. They are these: give up the traitors; there can be no peace between you and God while you harbour sin. Give them up, and he willing to renounce every sin of every sort and kind, for one harboured traitor will prevent God concluding peace with you.

Sinner, what sayest thou? Is it hard to give up thy sin? Does that condition strike thee as unreasonable? Out with the knife, man, and cut the throat of every iniquity. Why, there is no sin for which it is worth your while to be damned. A little rioting, and chambering, and wantonness-is that worth hell-fire for ever? What, to have thy giddy amusements for an hour or two, is this a due recompense for an eternity of fire unmitigated by a drop of water? I pray thee, be reasonable. Barter not away thy soul for trifles; pawn not eternity for the mere fictions of an instant. God give thee grace, sinner, not to kick at that condition. but at once cast out your enemies and gods, and then lay hold on Christ, on Jesus Christ alone, and let him stand as Ambassador for thee. Thou canst not fight it out. Let peace be made.

Oh may it be made to-night, through the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son.

Then next, confess that you deserve the King's wrath. Bow that head; put the rope about your neck as though you felt you deserved that the executioner should lead you forth. Pray to God for pardon, and cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" and then cling to the skirts of that appointed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who on yonder bloody tree made expiation for the sin of God's enemies, that they might thereby become God's friends. God demands of you a confession of your guilt. He will be honored by your humbling yourself before him. Your sin has aimed at his glory, and now he will glorify himself by your repentance. It were only just on his part if he spurned you away, and cast you out into the pit which hath no bottom, but he has said that whoso confesseth his sin shall obtain forgiveness. Go, therefore, in the spirit of the publican, smite upon your breast, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Confess that you deserve hell, but ask for heaven, and you shall not plead in vain. Only honor God's justice, and appeal to his mercy through the Lord Jesus Christ. This, surely, is not much for God to expect at your hands. If you will not submit, what can you say when God shall crush you? You refuse to bend the knee, and to bow the head; what will you do when God shall trample on you in his fury, and tread you in his hot displeasure? You must, therefore, now in the accepted time, while it is still the day of mercy, seek his face, and with weeping and supplication "take with you words, and turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

## **II.** And now we turn the subject, so as to look at THE SECOND CONTEST, IN WHICH I TRUST MANY ARE ANXIOUS TO BE ENGAGED.

Some young spirit that has been touched with a sense of its own condition, and somewhat aroused, may be saying, "I will be God's enemy no longer: I will be his friend." Bowing the knee, that heart cries, "Oh God, reconcile me unto thyself by the death of thy dear Son. I throw down all my weapons; I confess my guilt; I plead for mercy. For Jesus' sake vouchsafe it to me." "But," says that soul, "if I am the friend of God, I must be the foe of Satan, and from this day I pledge myself to fight for ever with Satan till I get the victory, and am free from sin." My dear friend, I want you to stop. I do not wish you to make peace with the evil one, but I want you to consider what you are at. There are a few things I would whisper in your

ear, and one is, that sin is sweet. The uppermost drops of sin's cup glitter and sparkle. There is pleasure in sin of a certain sort and for a certain season. It is a poisoned sweet; it is but a temporary delusion, but still the world does promise fair, its gingerbread is gilt, and though it wears nothing but tinsel, and a little gold-leaf now and then, yet it does look very much like gold. Canst thou, canst thou resist sin, when it seems so charming? The next time the cup is brought thee-thou knowest the flavour of it-oh, it is rich-canst thou turn away? Art thou certain that thou wilt be able to dash it from thy lips? Ah, man, thou wilt find it different when the trial-hour comes, to what it is now that thou art sitting in the Tabernacle and resolving, away from the temptation, that thou wilt do the right.

Remember, again, you may be enticed by friends who will be very pressing. You can give up sin just now, but you do not know who may be the tempter at some future time. If she should allure thee, who has tempted so well before! If he-he! should speak! He! the very word has wakened up your recollection; if he should speak as he alone can speak, and look as only he can look, can you then resist, and stand out? That witching voice, that fascinating eye! Oh how many souls have been damned for what men call love! Oh that they had but a little true love of themselves and others, and would not thus pander to the prince of hell. But alas, alas, while the cup itself looks sweet, there is to be added to it the hand that holds it out. It is not so easy to contend with Satan when he employs the service of some one whom you esteem highly, and love with all your heart.

Remember the case of Solomon whose wisdom was marvellous, but who was enticed by his wives, and fell a prey into the hands of the evil one. It needs a spirit like the Master's, to be able to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan," to the tempter, when he has the appearance of one of your best loved friends. The devil is a crafty being, and if he cannot force the door, he will try and get the key which fits the wards of the lock, and, by the means of our tenderest love and affections, will make a way for himself into our hearts; you will find it no easy task therefore to contend with him.

Then again, remember, man there is habit. You can you will all of a sudden give up your sins, and fight Satan. Do not tell me that; can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well. If you had never sinned as you have sinned, there were not this difficulty with you; but he that has gone day after day, and year after year, into sin, is not so easily turned from it. As well hope to make Niagara leap up instead of down, as make human nature flow back to

virtue instead of going downward to sin. You do not know yourself. Habit is an iron bond, and he that is once enveloped in it may pull and strain, but he will tear away his flesh sooner than break the links of that dread chain, We have seen men who, convinced of the error of their ways, have sought to turn from them without asking the help of God. For a time they have made some little progress in appearance, but it has only been like the retreating of the waves at the rising of the tide; their evil habits have returned upon them with a rush, and have covered them deeper than before. Read the parable of our Lord concerning the unclean spirit which went out of the man, and roamed through dry places, seeking rest but finding none, and it said, "I will return to the place from whence I went out." It came back, and found it swept and garnished, and then took to it seven other evil spirits, more wicked than itself, so the last end of that man was worse than the first. Thus it is with those who enter upon the work of saving themselves, without looking up by faith to God for his needed help. Satan will triumph over you. You are like the fly in the toils of the spider's web, the more it struggles, the more it will be encompassed. You must cry for help as you are quite unable of yourself to escape from the snares of the wicked one. He has you bound fast, hand and foot, and you will never break his cords, nor be able to cast his bands from you. You have no seven locks of strength like Samson, but you will certainly be overcome.

Again, you think you will give up sin, but ridicule is very unpleasant, and when the finger comes to be pointed at you, and they say, "Ah, so you have set up for a saint, I see;" when they put it as they only can put it, in such a sharp, cutting, grating manner; when it is wrapped up so wittily in an epigram that is told all round the shop against you, and when, moreover, there is some foible of yours, some giddy weakness, and they know how to hook on your attempt at saintship to your weakness, and they bandy that all round, and there are fifty laughing faces for you, can you stand that? Yes, it is a very pretty thing for you to come here on Sundays, and say what you will do, but it is different to do it on Mondays. To be laughed at is not really to a sensible man anything very wonderful, for, methinks, you have only to get used to it, and then you will just as much expect to hear people laugh at you, as to hear birds singing when you walk out of a morning; but at first that is a very sharp trial, that trial of "cruel mockings;" and many who have been going to fight Satan have drawn back, for they found they could not stand it. When the Jews were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem after their return from captivity, one of

the most severe tests of their zeal and devotion was the laughter of their enemies who came and looked on, and said, "What do these feeble Jews? Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." The words of their foes were more cutting than swords, and keenly did they feel in their spirits the derision of the scoffers. It is as painful now for the sensitive spirit as it was of old, but you must not be daunted. Heaven is worth buying, even though it should cost a life heaped full of stinging words and malicious sayings from a deriding and taunting world. Did not Christ himself show us how to endure this trial? See his foes gathered around him when he hung dying on the cross. They laugh at him even there: "He saved others, himself he cannot save," said they as they wagged their heads, and mocked alike his dignity and his woe. "If thou be the Christ, come down from the cross, and we will believe on thee." These sayings must have been bitterer to his spirit than the wormwood mingled with gall was to his lips. You must follow Christ here also if you would contend, as he did, with Satan. Then count the cost. Can you drink his cup, and be baptized with his baptism?

And yet further, let me say to you, you that are for going to heaven so zealously, - gain, gain is a very pretty thing, a very pleasant affair. Who does not like to make money? You know, if you can be religious, and grow rich at the same time, that will just suit some of you. Oh yes, the two going together, that will be admirable; you will kill the two birds with one stone. Mr. By-Ends said, "Now, if a man by being religious can get a good wife who has a considerable sum of money; and if by being religious he gets a good shop, and many customers, why," says he, "then religion is a good thing;" for to get a good wife is a good thing, and to get customers, that is another good thing, and so, he says, "The whole is a good thing put together." But he that knows Mr. By-Ends, knows that he is an old rogue, notwithstanding that he puts it prettily. I have known him. He is a member of this Church, I am sorry to say; I never went into a Church where he was not a member, I have tried to turn him out, and did once, but there was another one of the family left inside, and however many you may expel there are sure to be more of that breed remaining. But there sometimes comes a pinch with Mr. By-Ends. Now if you should find that shutting up your shop on Sundays should ruin your business, well, what then? Would you stand it? Now there are some of you that try it every now and then when you get spasmodically godly, but it does not pay you, you find; and so you begin once more to open shop on the Lord's day. Some of you

Sunday traders discover, that it gets a little hot and strong for you, when you come to the Tabernacle occasionally, and you shut up for a season, but soon you say, "Well, people must live." Yes, and people must die, and people must be damned too, if they try to live by breaking God's laws. Remember that it will not pay to be religious, some people fancy. We have heard of a man saying, "I cannot afford to keep a conscience, it is too expensive an article for me." Ah, but keep in mind the saying of the Lord, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" There is such a thing as being "Penny wise, and pound foolish," and there is such a thing also as being "worldly wise, and eternally foolish." Think of this then, for the trial will come to you in the shape of yellow gold, and it will be hard to keep yourself from the glittering bait which the god of this world will lay before you.

I am putting these things to you, so that you may calculate whether you can carry on the war against the devil with all these fearful odds against you. If I were a recruiting serjeant I should not do this. He puts the shilling into the country lad's hand, and the lad may say fifty things. "Oh never mind," says the gallant soldier, "you know, it is all glory, nothing but glory. There, I will just tie these ribbons round your hat. There are some long strips of glory to begin with, and then all your days it will be just glory, glory for ever; and you will die a general, and be buried at Westminster Abbey, and they will play the 'Dead March in Saul,' and all that kind of thing." Now I cannot thus deceive or try to cheat men to enlist under the banner of the cross. I do not desire to raise objections to it; all I want of you is to count the cost, lest you should be like unto him who began to build without being able to finish. That is the misery of so many. I advise you, if you are about to declare war with Satan, to see whether you are able to carry it out, and win the victory.

"Well," says one, "it is hard to be saved." Nobody ever thought it was not, I hope. What does Peter say? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" "It is hard to be saved," you say. Whoever said it was not? But it is not hard to be saved, if a man is willing to be received according to the plan which God has appointed. If Christ undertakes it, then it is done, and my counsel to those of you who are about making war with Satan, is to remember that it is too much for you, and therefore do not attempt it in your own strength. Beware of this. I know Satan will tempt you first of all to believe that you need no Savior,



then if you are not convinced of this but are disquieted because of sin, he suggests that you can save yourself. He speaks of Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus which flow close by your own door. He says, "Wash in these home streams, and be clean. Stay where you are, and help yourself;" but if you listen to the words of the seducer of souls you are lost and undone for ever. Can the man born blind see to operate upon his own scale-covered eyes so as to give himself sight? Can the crippled man run away from his lameness, and outrun the feebleness of his feet? Can the dead man exert himself to make the life-tide flow once more in his veins, and flush his cheek anew with the glow of health? Can he call back his departed spirit from the shades of the unseen world, and make it re-occupy its decaying habitation, and bid the marks of the mighty consumer begone, and leave no trace of Death's conquest behind, to remind the returning inhabitant that the palace had been occupied by the ruthless spoiler? We answer, no. A mighty finger must touch and open the eyes. An omnipotent arm must lift up the paralysed and impotent man into strength and power; and most evidently, if life is to be secured, the voice of God alone can speak the word which shall make the dead to live. On this point we wish to be clearly understood. You will never of yourself successfully resist sin so as to escape its thralldom; how much less can you remove its guilt? The cancer is in your blood, and you can never get it out. The black deed is done, and it is written, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Oh, then at once ask help of him who alone can save you from the wrath to come.

Remember, poor feeble one, nothing is too hard for God, and therefore ask Almighty strength to come unto your help. It is true you cannot contend with your besetting sins; your passions, your corruptions of whatever sort they may be, are much too strong for you; Old Adam is too mighty for you with your best intentions; but there is a strong one, whose hand, once pierced, is always ready and at the service of every sinner who would have Satan cast out. There is one "mighty to save" who can come to the rescue, and do for you what you cannot do for yourself. Oh that you had Christ to-night, so that at once you might cry to him, "Jesus, save me; I see the fight is too unequal for me, I cannot drive out my sins, I cannot fight my way to heaven; come and help me, Lord Jesus. I put myself into thy hands; wash me in thy blood, fill me with thy Spirit; save me with thy great salvation, and let me be with thee where thou art at the last."

"No man can save himself," says one. Yet the case is very like that of the master who sent his negro servant with a letter. The negro was, like some

others, rather lazy, and came back with it. "Why did you not deliver it?" "I could not." "Could not deliver it?" "No, master." "Why not?" "A deep river, sir, very deep river, I could not get across." "A deep river?" said he. "Yes." "Is not there a ferryman there?" "Do not know, sir; if there was, he was on the other side." "Did you call across, 'Boat, ahoy!'" "No, sir. Why then, you rascal," said he, "what does it matter; it is no excuse. It is true, you could not get across the river, but then there was one there who could take you, and you never cried to him." And so it is in your case. You say, "I cannot save myself." Quite true; but there is one who can, and you have never cried to him, for, mark you, if you cry to him, if your heart says, "Oh, Savior, come and save me," and your spirit rests in him, deep as that river of your sin certainly is, he knows how to bear you safely through it, and land you on the other shore. May he do that with each of you. With God all things are possible, though with man it is impossible. May the blessing of the Most High rest upon us this night for Jesus' sake. Amen.

# TWO LOVING INVITATIONS.

NO. 633

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.

*“Come and see.” — John 1:39.*

*“Come and dine.” — John 21:12.*

THE one text is in the beginning, and the other at the end of John’s gospel. There is a mystery here. Here is typified a growth which it were well for us to understand. “Come and see,” is for babes in grace: “Come and dine,” is for strong men in Christ Jesus. We must notice the order. “Come and see,” is the beginning of spiritual life, as it is the beginning of this gospel. “Come and dine,” is a high after-privilege of the spiritual life, and a blessed result of it. “Come and see,” this is the gospel’s cry to those outside its pale; it has nothing to conceal, it wears no mask, it has no most holy place into which entrance is forbidden; it has a “sanctum sanctorum,” but the way into it is open. Open and above-board in all its doings, the Truth as it is in Jesus bares its bosom secrets, and cries to every passer-by, “Come and see.” The seals of the book are broken, the darkness is rolled away, the vision is open, and with clarion note the invitation is issued “Come and see.” Romanism may conceal its worship under the Latin tongue; difficult phraseology and polished periods may hide from the multitude the teaching of professed Protestants, but the true preacher of Christ declares, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified; and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” The shutters of every window are turned back, the keys put into every lock, and every door is thrown wide open. Investigation is courted upon every point; the gospel stands at her door, and says, “Come in hither, come and see.”

You have this short sentence, “Come and see,” as, first of all, an encouragement to enquirers. Many of you are like John’s disciples; they had heard John preach, and they believed his Word, and when they saw

Christ to whom John pointed, they followed him, but not knowing him, they followed him with a question upon the tip of their tongues; "Master, where dwellest thou?" He said, "Come and see." You also are anxious to know Christ. You have heard his word preached by some of his witnesses, and you want to know him personally for yourselves. You have a pressing question to put to-night, and Jesus encourages you to ask, nay, to come, and get your own answer with your own eye. "Come," saith he, "Come and see."

There are three ways, I think, by which persons are to "Come and see." One is by observation. We ought to give attention to the teaching of the gospel, to weigh it and prove it, if it be found false, to cast it away with decision; but if it be found worthy of our attention, to hold it fast, and never let it go. Many persons are careless; they will consider the last new novel, or they have been clamouring to get the "Life of Julius Caesar," to see what the Emperor of the French can have to say upon that subject; but concerning Christ crucified they have no curiosity. They frequent their place of worship without feeling enough interest in the affair to ask themselves why they go. They do not expect to understand what they hear, or if they understand it, they care not whether the thing be true or not; it is nothing to them that Jesus should die. Now, surely, a theme which involves eternal consequences, a matter which deals with my immortal spirit, ought not to be put into the background, and left to careless inadvertence. I ought, at least, to give it something like the consideration which it claims at my hands. But some look at it through coloured spectacles. They are prejudiced against the gospel; they do observe it, they say, but their observation is tintured by themselves, and by their own character. Some persons make up their minds as to what the gospel ought to be before they try to find out what it is. They do not come to the Bible, nor to the hearing of the Word in order to discover what truth is; but they sit down, and dream, and fashion in their own minds just such a sort of concoction as they imagine gospel truth should be, and everything which is contrary to this they will kick against, like the foolish ox which kicks against the goad. It would be no use for me, in astronomy, to make an hypothesis, and then go out with a telescope, and say, "That star ought not to be where it is. According to my theory, Jupiter ought not to have moved as he has moved, and therefore I do not believe in Jupiter, nor in the stars, for I do not like their goings on." Who but madmen talk thus. I must always shape my views to facts, and regarding the Bible as the great storehouse of facts,

I must take care that I go to it with a candid and unbiassed judgment. May God help me so to do. To find out what truth is, "Come and see," but ask God to open your eyes that you may behold the wondrous things which are written in his law.

Does any one enquire how he can come and see in the matter of observation? We invite you, dear friends, to a diligent reading of How Scripture, as one means of seeing. The worst-read book in England is that Bible. People read a verse of it, or half a chapter in the morning, and think they understand it. Suppose any one were to read a poet in that way. Let the world's favored poet, Shakspeare, be treated in such a style as that, and what man could ever appreciate his beauties? If you get a poet, say Cowper, you read "The Task" through. You do not think of snatching a line or two here and there; if you did, you would be like the Greek pedant, who carried a brick about as a specimen of a house which he had for sale. If you read Young's "Night Thoughts," it is true that there almost every line is noteworthy, and is as finished as a distinct proposition; but still he who would appreciate the beauties of Young must read the "Night Thoughts" through, or, at least, read a book at a time. Yet there are thousands of you who never did read one of the gospels through, never read one of the epistles through with a studious mind, desiring to catch the drift, and to understand the sense; and do you dream you will ever know what the Bible teaches by just recalling a portion here, and a portion there? Impossible! Absurd! If you have any care to "Come and see," read the Bible in a common-sense way, and sit down with the determination that, as far as the human mind can find out what God means, you will know what he has revealed concerning his Son. I am not afraid of what the consequences will be, if you do that. If, moreover, you seek the aid of the Divine Spirit, your search cannot be in vain. You shall see Jesus, and rejoice in his great salvation.

Then, next, I earnestly desire you to hear the gospel as well as read it, only take care that what you hear is the gospel. It is very easy to find divines of flowery speech, and flowing tongue, from whom, in a course of seven years, you would probably learn nothing whatever of the doctrines of the covenant of grace. It has been said, that if you were to hear a lecturer on geology or astronomy deliver some twelve or thirteen lectures, you would be able to pick up a pretty clear idea of the system of geology or astronomy, which the lecturer meant to teach; but I avow and protest, and will prove it by sermons printed by sundry authors, that you might hear

thirteen thousand sermons of some men without knowing what system of Divinity they taught, if, indeed, they have any system of Divinity at all. What do you go to God's house for? Is it to have your ears tickled? Do you go to the place of worship that you may admire the eloquence of man? Go to your theater or your senate if this be your errand; such places are the legitimate arena for display; but come not to God's house for that. There we should resort to learn to pray, we should come that we may, in the words of our text, "see;" see ourselves, and better still, see the Lord Jesus. This should be the first enquiry as we go up the steps into the place of meeting; "Sirs, we would see Jesus;" and if Jesus is not to be seen there, no matter how brilliant the display of fireworks with which the sermonizer may indulge you; that is not the proper place in which to spend the precious hours of the Sabbath day. We would see Jesus, we would know what we must do to be saved. Observe then, observe carefully, keep your eyes open, not only to the world of nature, but to the Book of God, and the lives of his people, and thus "Come and see."

Truly, enquirer, there is a better way of coming and seeing, and that is by believing. If thou canst at once believe God's Word, thou shalt see far better than if thou art merely a seeker, and, surely, the revelation of God in Christ, may well demand thine implicit faith. See how true others have found it. If the proposition be, can Christ forgive sin? bear what others say who can sing of pardon bought with blood, and of promises applied to their souls with power breathing peace and pardon to their hearts, Do you remember your mother? Do you recollect the glitter of her eye in death's dark hour? Do you remember how she bore her dying testimony, that all that God had said concerning Christ was true, that he was able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him? She was no woman given to deception. If I remember rightly, you can say of her that she was a common-sense, shrewd woman, not easily to be deceived, and yet in that last article of death, when every sham comes crumbling down, and all that is mere paint and tinsel is broken and dashed away, she found the solidity of her hopes, and rejoiced therein. You have other friends. In business they are not second-rate men; with regard to matters of common sense you would trust them as well as any that you know; they are not hot-headed and enthusiastic, likely to be carried away by a multitude, after some harebrained prophet; and yet steadily and solemnly they tell you that Christ has given them new hearts, and right spirits, that he has changed their lives, that he has given them a peace and a joy they never knew before. They tell

you that they have answers to prayer, that whenever they spread their case before God, their heavenly Father hears them, and sends them speedy relief; they tell you that they find in religion a spring of moral action, such as was never found in the mere precepts and teachings of law and conscience. Now believe these men. If they were the worst men in the neighborhood, if they were the felons and rogues of trade, I would recommend you not to believe them, but since they are the best in the world, and rank high in your esteem, at least trust them so far as to come yourself to a candid observation of these things, and believe that at least there is some truth in them. I would to God, dear friends, that you would believe these things to be true concerning Christ's ability to save, because you have Cod's Word for it, and if you ask me how I know it is God's Word, I can take you in vision to Nineveh. See the excavated cities, and palaces, the winged bulls and lions buried in the rubbish, all which tell us that that Book which spoke of them, when they were not discovered, must have a high antiquity, and the volume which, written in the times of their glory, yet told of their tremendous fall, must have had an inspiration in it, not belonging to common books. The best proof of this inspiration is, perhaps, to be found in this, that we know that God wrote another book, the book of nature, and that as the two works of one author are quite sure to exhibit some common points in which you may find out the author's idioms, so every student of nature and revelation has been able to say that the two volumes bear marks of the same writer, and the more they have studied both books, the more they have said, "We find the self-same God in the one as in the other." The God of nature is kind and good, so is the God of revelation. The God of nature is the terrible God of the avalanche and thunderbolt, the tempest and the whirlwind, and the God of this book is terrible out of his holy place when he comes to judge the sons of men. We find that the very same imprimatur which is set upon the book of nature, is also stamped upon the book of God. We should be glad therefore if you could believe this, and believing this you would soon "come and see;" for mark you, the best way of knowing about Christ is to try him, to experience him, and since you want to know if he can forgive sins, trust him to forgive yours. You want to know if he can change the human heart; trust him to change yours. You long to know if there be a peace that passeth all understanding, which will still the throbs of your guilty heart; try him and see. You want to learn if there be a joy which can gild your darkest hours with sunlight, and make the dreary passage through the shades of death to be full of life and hope; try him and see. We are not

afraid to stake all upon the trial. I will cheerfully be bondsman for my Lord and Master. If there can be a soul that doth sincerely trust him, that shall not find even in this life salvation, and in the world to come eternal joy, then I am content to be deceived, or content to suffer the deceiver's doom. Beloved, if we only promised you something to be had in the next world, you could not make the test at once; but that which we hold out to you is present salvation. It is not some future joy merely, but present joy. Oh, if you trust Jesus Christ, you shall "Come and see" that sin is mastered as well as pardoned, that the guilty conscience is pacified for ever, and that your joy and peace can begin this side the grave. Enquirer, "Come and see." Oh, pass not by; neglect not the exhibition of divine love and grace; but "Come," oh, "come and see." May the Holy Spirit bring you for his name's sake.

Very hurriedly let me notice the next point. I think this invitation may be well addressed to every beginner in the school of Christ, as well as to every enquirer. We ought not to be satisfied with merely being saved. As soon as ever we are saved, as we are the moment we believe in Christ, our next business is to learn more of Christ. You want to know the doctrines, dear friends. It is well to be thoroughly established in the faith. "Come and see:" search the Scriptures; see what God has revealed, and be established in his divine truth. Every precept as well as every doctrine cries to yell, "Come and see." Every promise says, "Come and see," do not run short of promises. It is bad when a man is out of money; and the Christian when he is without a promise in his hand, is somewhat like a person without ready money in his purse. Study the promises. "Come and see." As to experience, too, the Lord says, "Come and see." Do not talk of Tabor's height, as though you could never climb it, From the top of it there comes a voice, "Come and see." Do not speak of Pisgah, as though your feet might never tread its consecrated summit. The voice saith, "Come and see." If there be any point of communion, or height of fellowship as yet unreached by you, there peals forth from its excellent glory the endearing exhortation, "Come and see." No bound is set about the mount of God; no fiery wall conceals the secret of the Eternal. "The Spirit of the Lord is with them that fear him; he will show them his covenant;" for all revelation cries with one voice, "Come and see."

Methinks, this is the cry of the gospel to every sinner, "Come and see." Perhaps it is easier to use the eye than any other organ except the ear. This I know, it is more pleasing to use the eye than the ear. You can keep a set



of children as happy as the birds of the air, with a picture book, when they would probably go to sleep if you were to talk to them. The eye has the greatest power of conferring pleasure. Whether it conveys truth to the heart more rapidly than the ear does, I cannot say. At any rate, it does so most pleasingly, and for this reason among others Christ bids us to use the eye. He hangs upon his cross before you, and cries, "Come and see;" and he adds this promise, "Look unto me, and he ye saved, all ye ends of the earth."

What is there to see? God made flesh. He that made the heavens, veiling himself in manhood. Is not this something? God came down to thee, poor sinner, that he might take thee up to himself. What is there to see? There is the Son of God bleeding for human sin. His griefs are such that no tongue can tell them, and no pen can write them; but they are not for himself, for in him is no sin. "Come and see," for if you see the griefs of Jesus, and take them to be your trust, you shall be saved. "Come and see." Do you ask what there is to see? This same Jesus rises from the tomb. He could not have risen if he had not been God, or if he had not completed the great work of his people's redemption. He ascends; the clouds receive him; up there in heaven he stands pleading for sinners, pleading for us, and "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." "Come and see." "Come and see."

I am often asked, "Sir, how can I get faith?" I believe that faith comes from Christ, and is his gift to sinners. Sit down in your chamber to-night when you get home, you that want to believe, and just think over this,-God made flesh! If you will think of that, I pray the Holy Ghost visit you, and then the thought will strike you: "That is wonderful! Who could have dreamed of it? God suffering instead of man, that the justice of God might be fully satisfied, and the mercy of God might have full scope!" While you are thinking of this wonder, and picturing the wounds, and looking to the blood, and thinking that you almost hear the droppings of the blood upon the Mount of Calvary, methinks you will, you scarce know how, find yourself ready to sing-

*"I do believe-I will believe  
That Jesus died for me;  
And on the cross he shed his blood  
From sin to set me free."*

You cannot make yourself believe. Faith is the gift of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit, but it comes through hearing, and hearing is principally blessed to the working of faith, because it gives you a sight of Christ in meditation, and, as some say, “seeing is believing.” Certainly such a sight as hearing gives is often made the channel by which the soul believes in Christ. “Come and see,” Oh thou wordling. Turn thine eyes hither, and see the Savior die. Mayhap the spectacle will cool your hot blood, and drive away your fever of worldliness and care. Oh! ye giddy, careless men and women, look hither, and see your Redeemer bleed; possibly you may be sobered by the sight. Oh young men and maidens, in your early youth, since ye may soon feel the arrows of death, look here, and make your immortality secure. Ye grey-headed ones who have lost your vigor, and spent your strength in sin, yet may the Holy Ghost bring you: “Come and see.” Oh, that there is mercy yet, “Come and see.” The great sight is not withdrawn: it is no dissolving view that melts away: it is no burning bush from which you are bidden to keep off by the words, “Draw not nigh hither;” but here, over the cross, hangs the motto, and from the mount of Calvary rings the silvery trumpet-note, “Come and see, Come and see.”

*“There is life in a look at the Crucified One;  
There is life at this moment for thee.”*

**II.** The second text is, “COME AND DINE.” That is better; that is closer, nearer, dearer, more substantial than “Come and see:” that may be done at a distance, though “come” seems to invite us to make the distance less. But, “Come and dine”—that implies the same table, the same meat; ay, and sometimes it means to sit side by side, and lean our head upon the Savior’s bosom. Here is nearness familiar and domestic—“Come and dine.” Understand that while we nine sinners faith brings us into a justified state by simply looking to Christ, though the soul has had no enjoyment of him; but after believing, faith then assists us really to enjoy Christ. I know some of you are wishing and expecting to enjoy Christ first, and believe him afterwards. I would correct your error. You must take God’s mercies in their order and season; and you will not find “Come and dine” in the first chapter of John—there it is, “Come and see.” Believe Jesus first., and you shall feed on him afterwards. Certain of you seem to me to be content to believe Christ, and to say, “I am safe,” without wishing to know the blessed enjoyment which is to be found in him. It should not be so. You are not to be content with the first chapter of John; but go on to the last, and be not satisfied so long as there is a “yet” beyond. If you have seen Christ;

if you have touched Christ; if you have put your finger into the print of the nails, he not satisfied till you know the meaning of the text, "Except a man eat my flesh and drink my blood, there is no life in him." "Come and dine," then, implies greater enjoyment than "Come and see." "Come and see" gives peace, but "Come and dine" gives ecstasy, rapture-what shall I call it? It gives heaven on earth, for it gives Christ. "Come amid dine" must be experimentally understood before you can read the Book of Solomon's Song within profit. "Come and see" can read the evangelists; "Come and see" can read many of the epistles; "Come and see" may wander delightfully through the Book of Psalms; "Come and see" may enrich itself with Proverbs; but the tree of life, which is in the midst of the garden-that is, the Book of Canticles-is not to be eaten of except by those who have heard the Master say, "Come and dine." I would to God that all the Lord's people were not merely delivered from the chains of sin and washed in the Savior's blood, but brought into the banqueting-house, where waves the banner of redeeming love. There is more enjoyment, then, in the one than in the other, and there is also more nearness. When I first believed in Christ I felt a distance between myself and him, and the only nearness that I could get to was to lay my hand upon his head and confess my sin; but I hope some of us, after a few years of believing, know what it is to sit at his feet with Mary, to lean upon his bosom with John — ay, and to say with the spouse, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." O beloved, there is a nearness to Christ which the worldling can only laugh at if he should hear us talk of it. Read "Rutherford's Letters," and you get glimpse of what it is to dine with Christ. Turn to "Hawker's Morning and Evening Portions;" or even, if you will, wander amidst the quaint rhymes and sweet poetry of dear George Herbert: there you have "Come and dine" carried out in sweetest poesy. Olin, to get so close to Christ, that you can sing with a modern hymn-writer-

*"So near, so very near to God,  
I cannot nearer be;  
For in the person of his Son  
I am as near as he!"*

*So dear, so very dear to God,  
I cannot dearer be;  
The love wherewith he loves his Son  
Such is his love to me!"*

This is a high attainment, but rest not satisfied till you have gained it. Yet, once more, “Come and dine” gives us a vision of union with Jesus, because the only meat that we can eat when we dine with Christ is himself. We do not provide the supper. When he dined on that occasion with his disciples, Peter dragged a net full of fishes out of the sea; but when they came on shore they found a fire ready kindled, and fish laid thereon, so that the fish they ate did not come out of that sea by their net, at any rate. Christ found the fish and lit the fire and found the bread, and then said, “Come and dine.” Ah! and the fire that warms our heart when we have fellowship with him comes from himself, and the fish that we eat is his own, and the wine that we drink flows from his own heart. Oh, what union is this! It is a depth that reason cannot fathom, that we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ. Here we stand and look, and look, and look, and though the water is clear as crystal, like the sea of glass before the throne of God, yet to the bottom of it angelic ken can never reach. One with Jesus- by eternal union one. What does this mean, believer?

*“One when he died; one when he rose;  
One when he triumphed o’er his foes;  
One when in heaven he took his seat,  
And angels sang of Hell’s defeat.”*

Canst thou comprehend it?

*“This covenant stands secure,  
Though earth’s old columns bow;  
The strong, the feeble, and the weak  
Are one in Jesus now.”*

*“Oh, sacred union, firm and strong,  
How great the grace, how sweet the song,  
That worms of earth should ever be  
One with incarnate Deity!”*

And yet it is so; and he that has listened to the Savior’s voice, “Come and dine,” knows it to be so, and rejoices therein.

In this also you find an invitation to enjoy fellowship with the saints. You are not to eat your morsel alone but in company. We sit down in heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and no small part of the hereafter bliss is connected with the fellowship which exists amongst the saints in glory. So also with our present feasting on the fat things full of marrow which Christ spreads before his chosen ones. We

enjoy the company as well as the feast, and find our happiness augmented by the society of kindred minds. The Supper of the Lord is the table of communion, not only with the Master, but also with all who love him in sincerity and truth. One of the surest ways of introducing discord into the midst of a Church is for the minister to starve the people. Hungry men are sure to be quarrelsome, and, on the contrary, to unite a flock in closest bonds of love, let the minister say, "Come and dine;" and then put before them the finest of time wheat, honey out of the rock, and wine upon the lees well refined. If you would have sweetest fellowship with each other, live on Christ, enter into the banquetting house, sit beneath the banner of love, and you will find that sacred commingling of spirit with spirit which will prove that you are one in Christ Jesus. Christians may differ on a variety of points, they may not see eye to eye on this thing and on that, but they have all one spiritual appetite, and if we cannot all feel alike, we can all feed alike on the bread of life sent down from heaven. Get nearer to Christ and eat of his flesh and drink of his blood, and you will find yourself linked more and more in spirit to all who are like yourself, supported by the same heavenly manna. We do not expect to see all Christians agreeing, but we are sure that one of the most likely plans for cultivating a brotherly spirit is to listen to Christ's words, "Come and dine."

We see in these words the source of strength for every Christian. To look at Christ is to live, but for strength to serve him you must come and dine. When our Lord had raised the daughter of Jairus, he commanded them to give her meat so that she might be strengthened; and so he says to all of us, "Come and dine." We as need much food for the soul as for the body, and unless we eat we shall be fainting by the way. Are there not many Christians who allow themselves to suffer a great deal of unnecessary weakness on account of neglecting this precept of the Master? I hold that we are bound to lift up the feeble knees and drooping hands, and in order to do this, we must live by faith on time Son of God, and listen to his voice as he says, "Eat., oh my friends, yea, drink oh my beloved." If you want to be as Mr. Feeblemind, I can give you the receipt. Take only a small modicum of spiritual food morning and night in your closets; neglect family prayer; never attend a prayer. meeting; on no account speak about religious matters during time week, go late to the house of God, and fall asleep when you get there; as soon as you leave the place of worship talk about the weather. Confine yourself to these rules for a few weeks, and you will very soon be reduced low enough to allow Satan to attack you with every

chance of giving you a severe and dangerous fall. Doctors tell us that now-a-days the classes of disease most prevalent are those which indicate a low condition of the vital forces; and I think that we are suffering in the Church from the same sort of maladies. You never hear of any one who is too zealous, too rash in venturing himself for Christ. There was a time when the Church had to censure her young converts because they courted persecution and invited martyrdom, now we need to stir up the Church and to urge on our people to more self-sacrifice for the cause of Christ. You need never fear that any one will kill himself with over work; we must rather lament that there seems so little exuberance of spirit and vital force amongst Christians. We none of us need to put ourselves on low diet; on the contrary, we ought to accumulate strength and urge every power to its full dimension in the Master's service. For this purpose, "Come and dine." All your strength depends upon union with Christ. Away from him you must wither as a branch severed from the vine. Feeding on him, you will be like the branch which is drinking up the sap from the parent stem; you will be strong enough to bring forth fruit, and fill your post among the other members of the one great band of Christians.

We can see, moreover, in these words, the foundation of the Christian's growth and progress in spiritual things. To see Christ is to begin the Christian's life, but to grow in grace we must "Come and dine." The early history of the first disciples is by no means satisfactory. They were evidently only babes in spiritual things. How little they seemed to comprehend the Savior's mission; he likes to say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me Philip?" They misunderstood the nature of his kingdom, and were continually displaying a carnal and selfish spirit. It is evident that the early dawn of spiritual life is all they had then received. They had seen Jesus, they loved him and followed him even unto trial and disgrace, but yet they were far from possessing the spirit of Christ. Now after they had reached this stage of living on Christ they became new men. It is no longer more sight, but an inward appropriation of Christ Jesus by faith, and the consequences are manifest; they are seen developing themselves under the blessed outpouring of the Holy Ghost into workmen that needed not to be ashamed. They endured hardness as good soldiers of the cross. They fought a good fight, and they finished their course with joy. A higher order of life is clearly theirs. They have risen in the scale of spiritual existence. A clearer light shines around them, and they have manifestly grown in grace,

and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Beloved, we long for your edification, we covet for you the best gifts, and therefore we say, "Come and dine." Many Christians remain stunted and dwarfed in spiritual things, so as to present the same appearance year after year. No upspringing of thought and feeling is manifest in them. They exist but do not grow. The reason is evident, they are not taking of Christ, and they neglect to appropriate to themselves the blessing which he is waiting to bestow. Why should you rest content with being in the tender green blade, when you can go on and reach the ear and eventually the full corn in the ear? I would that all God's servants were more in earnest to develop that good thing which has been implanted in them by the Holy Ghost. It is all very well to keep other men's vineyards, but you must not neglect your own. Why should it ever be winter time in our hearts. We must have our seed time, it is true, but oh for a spring time-yea, a summer season, which shall give promise of an early harvest. Now, if you would ripen in grace you must live near Christ-in his presence-basking in the sunshine of his smiles. You must hold sweet communion with him. You must leave the distant view of his face and come near, as did John, and pillow your head on his breast. Then you will find yourself advancing in holiness, in love, in faith, in hope-yea, in every godly gift. What a joy it is to see men daily living on Christ.

You may watch them grow as you have watched the flowers and trees in the gardens expanding under the genial showers and sunshine of the last few weeks. It robs a deathbed of its terrors to see the aged Christian rapidly preparing for glory, but I would rather the man grew before he was about to be taken from us, so that we might be the better for his expanded graces, and enjoy his beauty of holiness a few years here on earth. We do not grudge the saints in glory anything, but it would be a mercy to us if Christians would try and get as much of perfection and maturity as possible a few years sooner, so as to gladden our eyes with some bright blossoms, as well as the sombre green blades. It is all very well the fresh verdure in early spring, but I like also the russet hues of autumn, and the rich clusters of the vintage, with the songs of the reaper and the shout of "harvest home." The golden grain is a goodly and pleasant thing to see, as the field waves in the autumn breeze. So, also, I like to mark maturity in Christ's fields, as well as in the earthly ones. It is a glorious sight, an experienced saint; a man who has been much with Jesus, and learned of him; who has caught the Master's spirit, and reflects it brightly to all around.

As the sun rises first on mountain-tops and gilds them with his light, and presents one of the most charming sights to the eye of the traveler, so is it one of the most delightful contemplations in the world to mark the glow of the Spirit's light on time head of some saint, who has risen up in spiritual stature, like Saul, above his fellows, till, like some mighty alp, snow-capped, he reflects first of all the beams of the Sun of righteousness, and bears the sheen of his effulgence high aloft for all to see, and seeing it, to glorify his father which is in heaven. That you may thus grow in grace, listen to the Master's voice—"Come and dine."

We notice one more thought, and then must conclude.

Here is preparation for service. "Come and dine," says the Master; but before time feast is concluded, he says to Peter, "Feed my lambs;" and again, "Feed my sheep;" further adding, "Follow me." All time strength supplied by Christ is for service, and for use in his vineyard. When the prophet Elijah found the cake baked on the coals, and the cruise of water placed at his head, as he lay under the juniper tree, he had a commission to go forty days and forty nights in the strength of it, journeying towards Home, the mount of God. So also with us; we eat so as to be able to expend our strength in the Master's service. We come to the passover, and eat of our paschal lamb with loins girt, and with our staff in our hand, so as to start off at once when we have satisfied our spirits. Some Christians are for living on Christ, but are not so anxious to live for Christ. Now I rejoice to know that I can spend and be spent for the Lord, and I find in that labor for Christ that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." I never feel so like to the Master as when I go about trying to do good. Heaven is the place where saints feast most and work most. They sit down at the table of our Lord, and they serve him day and night in his temple. They eat of heavenly food and render perfect service. Now, earth should be a preparation for heaven; come and dine, and then go and labor. Freely ye receive, freely give; gather up all the fragments of your feast, and go and canny it to Lazarus at the gate; yea, rather carry the loaves and fishes to others, as did the disciples, when the Lord had multiplied their little store, to satisfy the thousands who were famishing for want of food. We have yet to learn more concerning the design of our Lord in giving us his grace. We are not to hold the precious grains of truth like a mummy does the wheat, for ages, without giving it a chance of growing. No, feed yourself, and then go forth and bid others come and eat and drink; go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that there may be many more



rejoicing with you in the light and life of Christ. Why does the Lord send down the rain upon the thirsty earth, and give the sunshine and the genial refreshing breeze? Is it not that these may all help the fruits of the earth to yield food for man and beast? Even so the Lord calls us in to enjoyment and feasting, that we may afterwards go out to labor and service. My dear hearers, I ever seek to see you fruitful in all good works, to do his will who provides for us all things richly to enjoy. You are aware that herein is our Father glorified; if we bring forth much fruit, so shall we be his disciples. Eat, then; spare not; you are welcome to as much as you can consume, but when you have eaten the fat, and drunk of the sweet, go and tell of it to sinners round, that the starving may come and find “wine and milk, without money and without price.” You are to preach the gospel to every creature—proclaim the good news of water from the rock Christ Jesus, which flows in the midst of the world’s wilderness, so that all may drink and live. Tell of the finest of the wheat on which you have feasted. Bid the prodigal leave the husks which the swine do eat and return to the father’s house, there to eat of the fatted calf, and feast at the parental board. Tell them there is room in the Savior’s heart, and never cease till you can no longer speak, proclaiming his matchless love and power, and his willingness to say to all, “Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Come and dine.”

I send you away, however, wishing to make the first part of the sermon the more telling to most of you—“Come and see.” You are black, but blackness does not blind the eye. Your righteousness is nothing better than filthy rags, but the most ragged beggar may look. Our queer old proverb says, “A cat may look at a king,” and the blackest sinner out of hell may look at Christ and though he had sin well nigh as devilish as that of Lucifer, yet, looking to Christ, all manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven him. Look, sinner—look! May the Holy Spirit now open that eye of thine, and turn it to the Savior’s cross, and make thee live! May the best of heaven’s blessings be yours to-night and in eternity! Amen and Amen.

# CHRISTIANS KEPT IN TIME AND GLORIFIED IN ETERNITY.

NO. 634

*BY C. H. SPURGEON ON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” — Jude 24, 25.

OMITTING all preface, it will be well to observe in what state of mind Jude was when he penned this Doxology, what had been his previous meditations, and when we have done so, we will endeavor to come directly to the text, and observe what mercies he sums up in it, and what praise is due from us to him of whom he thus speaks.

**I.** Then, UNDER WHAT INFLUENCE WAS JUDE’S MIND WHEN HE PENNED THIS DOXOLOGY.

Our first observation is that in writing this very short but very full epistle, he had been led to consider the grievous falls of many others, and in contemplating those failures he could not resist the impulse of penning these words, “Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling.” You observe in reading that he mentions the Israelites who came out of Egypt. That was a glorious day in which the whole host met at Succoth, having just escaped from the thralldom of Egypt, and now found themselves delivered from the whips and the lashes of the task-masters, and were, compelled. no longer to make bricks without straw, and to build up palaces and tombs for the oppressors. That was, if possible, a yet more glorious day when God divided the Red Sea to make a way for his people. The depths stood upright as an heap, when the elect multitude walked through. Do you not see them, as with songs and praises they are led all that night through the deep as on dry ground; they are all landed on the other side,

and then their leader lifts up his rod, when immediately there comes a wind, and the waters return to their place. The infatuated Egyptian king, who with his hosts had followed them into the depths of the sea, is utterly destroyed; the depths have covered them. They sank as lead in the mighty waters, there is not one of them left. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel, saying, "I will sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

Is it credible, is it not too sadly incredible, that this very people who stood by the Red Sea and marked the overthrow of God's enemies, within a few days were clamouring to go back into Egypt, and before many months had passed, were for taking to themselves a leader, that they might force their way back into the place of their bondage? Aye, and they who saw Jehovah's work and all his plagues in Zoan, made to themselves a calf, and bowed down before it, and said, "These be THY gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt:" With tears in your eyes, look at the many griefs which studded the pathway of their forty years' wandering, and with many fears reflect that out of all that multitude which came out of Egypt, there were but two who lived to cross Jordan. Aaron must put off the breastplate, for he has sinned against God, and even Moses the meekest of men, must go to the top of Nebo, and is only permitted to gaze upon the prospect of that land which he must never actually enjoy, for save Caleb and Joshua, there were none found faithful among all the tribes, and these alone shall enter into the goodly land WHICH FLOWETH with milk and honey.

Now when Jude thought of this, I do not wonder that he began to consider the case of himself and of his fellow-believers united with him in Church fellowship at Jerusalem and elsewhere; and knowing that all of them who were truly brought up out of Egypt by Jesus, shall surely enter into the promised rest, he cannot, he does not desire to resist the impulse of singing, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, he glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." If YOU read on to the next verse, you perceive that Jude had another example in his mind's eye- the angels that kept not their first estate. We do not know much of angels, but from what we gather in Holy Scripture — perhaps tinged in our reading with some of the half-inspired ideas of Milton — we believe that angels are spirits vastly superior to ourselves. In intelligence they may well be so, even if they had been

created upon a par, for they have had many years in which to learn, and gather experience, whereas man's existence is but a handbreadth. We regard an angel with intense respect, and while never paying any worship to those noble beings, we cannot but feel how little we are when compared with them. One of these angels appears to have been named Lucifer, son of the morning- perhaps he was a leader in the heavenly host, and first among the princes of heaven. He, together with multitudes of others, fell from their allegiance to God. We know not how; we have no idea that they were tempted, unless one of them tempted the other; but they kept not their first estate-they were driven out of heaven, they were expelled from their starry thrones, and henceforth they are reserved in chains of darkness until the great day of account.

Now, my brethren, can you think of the fall of angels without trembling? Can you think of the morning stars put out in blackness? of the cherub whose head did wear a crown, cast into the mire, and his crown rolled into the dust? Can you think of these bright spirits transformed into the hideous fiends that devils are; their hearts, once temples for God, now become the haunt of every unclean thing, themselves the most unclean? Can you think of that without feeling a tremor of fear lest you, too, should fall from your first estate? and without another and a higher thrill of joy, when you think of him who is "able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy?"

*"When any turn from Zion's way,  
(Alas! what numbers do,)  
Methinks I hear my Savior say,  
'Wilt thou forsake me too?'"*

*Ah, Lord! with such a heart as mine,  
Unless thou hold me fast,  
I feel I must, I shall decline,  
And prove like them at last."*

But we can also sing right joyously — "The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose, he will not, he will not, desert to its foes; That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, He'll never, no never, no never, forsake."

We might continue to follow Jude, but we will not do so; we prefer to add something which Jude has not put in his epistle. Our first parent, Adam, lived in the midst of happiness and peace in the garden. Unlike ourselves, he had no depravity-no bias towards evil. God made him upright; he was

perfectly pure, and it was in his own will whether he should sin or not. The balance hung evenly in his hand. But you have not forgotten how on that sad day he took of the forbidden fruit, and ate, and thereby cursed himself and all of us. My brethren, as you think of Adam, driven out of the garden of Eden, sent out to till the ground whence he was taken, compelled in the sweat of his face to eat bread; when you recollect the bowers he left, the happiness and peace that have for ever passed away through his sin, do you not hear the voice that says to you, as a depraved and fallen creature, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall?" Conscious of your own weakness as compared with your parent Adam, you are ready to cry out, "O God, how can I stand where Adam falls!" But here comes the joyous thought—Christ, who has begun with you, will never cease till he has perfected you. Can you help singing with Jude, "Now unto him who is able to keep us from falling?" It strikes me that every time we mark an apostate, and see the fall of a sinner or of a fellow-professor, we should go down on our knees and cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe," and then rise up and sing—

***"To our Redeemer God  
Eternal power belongs,  
Immortal crowns of majesty,  
And everlasting songs.***

***He will present our souls  
Unblemished and complete  
Before the glory of his face,  
With joys divinely great."***

This partly accounts for the text before us; but on a further reference to the epistle we get another part of the thoughts which had exercised the apostle's mind. Observe, dear friends, that the apostle had a very vivid and distinct sense of the nature of the place into which those fell, and of their utter ruin and destruction. Notice, concerning the children of Israel, he says that "God destroyed them that believed not." "What is it to be destroyed? Destroyed! This does not end with the whited skeleton and the bleached bones which lay in the wilderness, a horror to the passer-by; he means something more than even that. Brought out of Egypt, and yet destroyed! Take heed, professor. You may be brought into something like gospel liberty, and yet may perish. Take heed, thou carnal professor, I say! Thou mayest fancy thou hast escaped the bondage of the law, but yet thou shalt never enter into the rest which remaineth for the people of God, but thou

shalt he destroyed. Let that word “destroyed” ring in your ears, and it will make you bless God, who is able to keep you from falling, if it shall lead thee to flee to him for help.

Next, he says of the fallen angels, that they are “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” What that may be we can but roughly guess. Satan is allowed to go about the world, but still he wears his chains, he has a tether, and the Lord knows how to pull him in, both by providence and direct acts of power. We believe that these spirits are under darkness; a gloom, a thick darkness that may be felt, hangs perpetually over their minds wherever they may be, and they are waiting till Christ shall come to summon them as rebellious creatures before his bar, that they may receive their sentence, and begin afresh their dreadful hell. And remember, dear brethren and sisters, unless eternal love shall prevent it, this case must be yours. We too must enter into places reserved in darkness, wearing everlasting chains, to endure eternal fire. We should do so, we must do so, if it were not for him “who is able to keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” Nor is this all, for if you will patiently read the next verse, you will see that Jude has, if possible, introduced a more graphic picture. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrha are bright as the sun goes down. The inhabitants are merry with boisterous laughter, there is plenty in the barn, there is luxury in the hall, for the plain of Sodom was well watered and lacked for nothing. Down went that sun upon a disastrous eve, never to rise upon the most of those who were in that doomed city. At day-break, just as the sun is beginning to shine upon the earth, angels had hastened Lot and his family out of the city, and no sooner had they reached the little city of Zoar than straightway the heaven is red with supernatural flame, and down descends a terrific rain, as if God had poured hell out of heaven. He rained fire and brimstone upon the cities, and the smoke of their torment went up, so that Abraham far away to the west, could see the rolling cloud, and the terrible brightness of the fire, even at mid-day; and as men go to the “Lacus Asphaltites,” or the Dead Sea, they see to this day where death has reigned. There are masses of asphalt floating still upon the surface of that sea, where there is nought that lives; no fish swim in its turbid streams; there are indubitable evidences there of some dread judgment of God. And as Jude thought of this, he seemed to say, “Oh God, preserve us from such a doom, for this is the doom of all apostates, either in this world, or in that which is to come, thus to be consumed with fire.” And as he remembered

that God would keep his people, he blessed that protecting hand which covers every saint, and he wrote down, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling."

I have a thought in my mind, I cannot of course tell whether it is right or not, but it strikes me just now-the author's name is Jude- Judas. Did he recollect Judas, his namesake that was called Iscariot, as he penned these words? He had known him, probably had respected him as the others had done; he had marked him that night when he sat at the table, and like others said, "Is it I?" Probably Jude was very surprised when he saw Iscariot take the sop and dip in the dish with the Savior, and when he went out he could scarcely believe his own ears, when the Savior said, that he that betrayed him had gone forth. He must have known how Judas kissed the Son of Man and sold him for thirty pieces of silver. He could not but be aware how in remorse he hanged himself, and how his bowels gushed out; and methinks the shadow of the doom of Judas fell upon this better Judas while he penned these words, and he seems to say with greater emphasis, "Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, unto him he glory for ever and ever." Thus you see, dear friends, we are getting into the track, I think, of Jude's thoughts-he thought about the failures of others, and the terrible way in which they had fallen.

Yet again, by your leave, Jude had a very clear view of the greatness of the sins into which apostates fall. Probably there is not in the whole compass of Holy Writ a more fearful picture of the sin of backsliders and apostates than in the epistle of Jude. I remember preaching to you one evening from that text, "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." I remember how you trembled, myself trembling most, with such a terrible message to deliver. Where could such a text or simile be found but in the book of Jude? The sins of apostates are tremendous. They are usually not content with the average of human guilt; they must make themselves giants in iniquity. None make such devils as those that were once angels, and none make such reprobates as those who once seemed to bid fair for the kingdom of heaven. These go into filthy dreams, into sensuality; "they give themselves over to fornication, and go after strange flesh," as he has put it. In fact, where can we set the bounds to which a man will go, when he crucifies the Lord that bought him, and puts him to an open shame? Oh, beloved, as I think of the sin into which these apostates have gone, I cannot but feel that you must bless God with Jude, that there is one "who

is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”

**II.** I might continue in this strain, but perhaps I had better not. I would rather turn to THE BLESSINGS OF WHICH JUDE SPEAKS.

He seems to ascribe here in this doxology three blessings, at least, to the power of the Lord Jesus. The first is ability to keep you from falling, and for this, I am sure, the highest praise is due, when you consider for a moment the dangerous way. In some respects the path to heaven is very safe. It is so as God made it, but in other respects there is no road so dangerous as the road to eternal life. It is beset with difficulties. In some of our mountain climbings, we have gone along narrow pathways, where there was but a step between us and death, for deep down beneath us was a gaping precipice, perhaps a mile in perpendicular descent. One's brain reels at the thought of it now, and yet we passed along quite safely. The road to heaven is much like that. One false step, (and how easy it is to take that, if grace be absent,) and down we go. What a slippery path is that which some of us have to tread.

You know that there are a million opportunities in a single week for your foot to slip, and for your soul to be ruined. There are some spots, I believe, upon some of the more difficult Swiss mountains where no man ought to go at all, I think, and where, if any must go, they should be only such as have become most accomplished mountaineers, through years of practice; for one has to cling to the rock side, to hold on, perhaps, by bushes or stones that may be there, with nothing for the feet to rest upon except, perhaps, an inch of projecting crag, and so we go creeping on with our backs to the danger, for to look down upon it would be to make the brain reel and cause us to fall, and the result of falling, of course, would be the end of life—the body would be dashed into a thousand pieces. Such is truly the way to heaven. You must all have passed some such difficult places, and, in looking back, I can only myself say, “Unto him that has kept me from falling, when my feet had well nigh gone, and my steps had almost slipped, unto him be glory for ever and ever.”

But next, you have to think of the weakness of the person. Some men may travel roads which would not be safe for others, and what are you, my brother pilgrim, but a little babe. It is unsafe to trust you along time pathway to glory; in the best roads you are soon tripped up. These feeble knees of yours can scarce support your tottering weight. A straw might



throw you, and a pebble stone could wound you. Oh, if you shall be kept, how must you bless the patient power which watches over you day by day. Reflect upon your tendency to sin. The giddiness of that poor brain, the silliness of that deceitful heart. Think, how apt you are to choose danger, how the tendency is to cast yourselves down, how you rather are inclined to fall than to stand, and I am sure you will sing more sweetly than you have ever done, "Glory be to him, who is able to keep me from falling." Then, you have to notice, further, the many foes who try to push you down. The road is rough enough, the child is weak enough, but here and there is an enemy who is in ambush, who comes out when we least expect him, and labors to trip us up, or hurl us down a precipice. I suppose you never did see a man fall from a precipice. Some of you may have been fools enough to go and see a man walk on a rope, in which case, I believe, you have incurred the guilt of murder; because if the man does not kill himself, you encourage him to put himself where he probably might do so. But if you have ever really seen a man fall over a precipice, your hair must surely have stood on end, your flesh creeping on your bones, as you saw the poor human form falling off the edge, never to stand in mortal life again: surely as you left the place where you stood, and fled away from the edge of the precipice, you cried, "O bless the that made me stand, and kept my feet from falling." How alarmed you would be, if you were in such a position and had seen one fall, and that same monster who had pushed him over, should come to hurl you over also, and especially if you felt that you were as weak as water, and could not resist the gigantic demon. Now, just such is your case; you cannot stand against Satan; yea, your own flesh will be able to get the mastery over your spirit. A little maid made Peter deny his Master, and a little maid may make the strongest among us tremble sometimes. Oh, if we are preserved in spite of such mighty enemies, who are ever waiting to destroy us, we shall have great cause to sing praise "unto him that is able to keep us from falling."

Christ has the power to take us into heaven. You may keep a man from starving, but you cannot take him into the king's palace, and present him at court. Suppose that a man had been a rebel, you might hide him from the pursuers, and aid in his escape, but you could not take him into the presence of the king, and cause him to live in the royal castle of the land. But you see that Christ preserves his people though they have offended God, and daily provoke his justice; and he does more, for he presents them to the King of kings in the high court of heaven itself. This it is which

makes the other blessing so great. We are not anxious to live in this world always. We find ourselves in a strange land here, and would he glad to fly away, and be at rest. This is to us a wilderness state, and we rejoice to know that Canaan lies beyond. Our heavenly Joshua can lead us into it. He can fight for us against Amalek, and slay all our foes, and preserve us from falling; but better still, he can and will take us into the promised land, and give us to see the “better country, even the heavenly,” and thither will he conduct all the host, so that not one shall perish or be left behind. Christ gives preservation, but he adds glorification, and that is still better. Here then, my brethren, is a thought of incomparable sweetness, we are safe while in this world

*“More happy, but not more secure  
The glorified spirits in heaven.”*

And we too shall be, before long, as happy as they are, because he will present us with them before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

We cannot, however, enlarge on this point, though there is much very much that ought to be said. We proceed to notice the condition in which the saints are to be when presented—they are to be “faultless;” for our Lord never stops short of perfection in his work of love. That Savior who means to keep his people to the end, will not present them at last just alive, all black and foul as when he helped them out of the miry places. He will not bring them in, as sometimes gallant men have to do those whom they have rescued from drowning, with just the vital spark within them. No, our Savior will carry on his people safe from falling, through this life, and he will present them, how?—faultless. Oh, that is a wondrous word, “faultless;” we are a long way off from it now. Faulty, aye we are now faulty through and through, but Jesus Christ will never be content till we are faultless. And this he will make us in three ways: he will wash us till there is not a spot left, for the chief of sinners shall be as white and fair as God’s purest angel; the eye of justice will look, and God will say, “No spot of sin remains in thee.” You may have been a drunkard, a thief, an adulterer, and what not; but if Christ in mercy undertakes your case, he will wash you in his blood so thoroughly that you shall be faultless at time last; without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Now we are defiled and covered with sin as if we had “lien among the pots.” We have revelled in uncleanness till we are—as if we had been “plunged in the ditch.” Our own flesh must abhor us if we could but see how defiled we are by nature and by practice.

Now all this shall be completely removed, and we shall be whiter than snow. You remember that when the disciples looked at Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, they saw that his garments were white and glistening, whiter than any fuller could make them; now, so shall we be hereafter, whiter and fairer than any earthly art can attain to. The sea of glass, clear as crystal, will not be whiter nor purer than we shall be when washed in the blood of the Lamb.

But that is only one way. If a man had no fault, yet it would be necessary for him to have some virtues. A man cannot enter heaven simply because transgression is put away. The law must be kept, there must be a positive obedience to divine precepts. Religion is no negation, an absence of things evil merely; it is the presence of the good, the true, the pure. But since even when we do our best we shall be unprofitable servants, we need something higher than we can ever produce by these our feeble and sinful powers: therefore the Lord our God imputes to us the perfect righteousness of his Son Christ Jesus, for

*“Lest the shadow of a spot  
Should on my soul be found;  
He took the robe the Savior wrought,  
And cast it all around.”*

The righteousness of Jesus Christ will make the saint who wears it so fair that he will be positively faultless. Yes, perfect in the sight of God. There is a fullness in this which it delights my soul to dwell upon. A man may be faultless in my sight, but not in the sight of those who know him intimately. A Christian may be so holy as to escape the censure of all just men; but ministering spirits, who read the heart and deal with the inner man, can speak of evil which has not come to light before human eyes. But we know that God sees even more clearly than angelic spirits, for he charges them with folly. Now, God is to see no iniquity in us, no shortcoming. We shall be tried in his scales, and set in the light of his countenance, and he pronounced “faultless.” God’s law will not only have no charge against us, but it will be magnified in us, and honored by us. We shall have imputed to us that righteousness which belongs to him who has done all this for us that he might “present us faultless before the presence of his glory.”

And fourthly, and best, perhaps, the Spirit of God will make new creatures of us. He has begun the work and he will finish it. He will make us so perfectly holy, that we shall have no tendency to sin any more. The day will

come when we shall feel that Adam in the garden was not more pure than we are. You shall have no taint of evil in you. Judgment, memory, will—every power and passion shall be emancipated from the thralldom of evil. You shall be holy even as God is holy, and in his presence you shall dwell for ever. How altered we shall be; for look within, and see if your experience is not like the Apostle Paul's, who found a potent law in his members, so that when he would do good evil was present with him, and when he desired to escape some evil, he did at times the very thing he allowed not, but would most heartily condemn. So is it with us; we would be holy, but we are like a ball that has a bias in it, we cannot go in a straight and direct line. We try to hit the mark, but we are prone to start on one side like a deceitful bow. There is a black drop in our hearts which taints all the streams, and none of them can be pure; but it will be all changed one day, we 'shall be re-made, and all the evil gone, gone for ever.' How joyous must have been the entrance of Naaman, the Assyrian, into his house after he had washed in Jordan's stream, and found his flesh restored to him as the flesh of a little child. I think I see him, as the watchman on the tower has given notice of his approach in the distance, the whole household are at the gate to meet him, and to see if he comes back in health. His wife, if eastern customs would not permit of her going forth in public, would look from her casement to catch a glimpse of his face, to see if the dread spot was gone. How joyful the shout, "He is cured and clean!" But this is nothing compared with the rapture of that hour when the everlasting doors will be lifted up, and we, made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, shall enter into the joy of our Lord. Or take another illustration from Scripture, and try and realize the happiness which reigned in the family of the maniac out of whom the legion of devils had departed. Perhaps he had been home before when under the evil influence of the foul fiends; how terrified they doubtless were with the mad frenzy of the poor unhappy wretch as he cut himself with stones, and brake all bonds put on him in tenderness and love in order to restrain his self-imposed misery and wounds; and now that he comes once more to his house, they see him approach, and the old terror seizes them because they know not that he is a changed man, but suppose him still to be the demented being of days gone by; but as he enters the door, as calm and composed as if he had returned from a long journey, and were only anxious to relate the incidents of the pilgrimage and greet loved friends once more; with no fierce frenzy rolling in his eye, no loud discordant shrieks rending the air, but all is the demeanour of a well-regulated, joyful, yet chastened

mind; as all this is realized by his friends, and they hear what great things the Lord has done for him, what joy must have been in that family circle. I should like to have seen it. I am sure it was a choice exhibition of real human bliss, such as earth only witnesses now and then. A beam of purest radiance lighting up the scene, like as the splendor which Saul of Tarsus saw on the road to Damascus lit up the day, when he was made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Here also we can most truthfully say, that the joy, though great, was not comparable to the joy which shall be ours when we are changed into new creatures, when we shall be clothed and in our right mind; no longer prone to wander among the black mountains of iniquity, no more tempted to abide amongst those dead in trespasses and sins, but ever holy, and always living unto God, and made like unto him. Oh this is joy indeed! Not only will he keep us from falling, but present us faultless. My brethren and sisters, at the thought of this I think you must join with Jude, and say, "Now unto him that is able to do all this, he glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever."

I cannot speak to you as I would wish upon such a theme as this- who could? but when we get to heaven, there our song shall be more sweet, more loud, because we shall understand better the dangers from which we have escaped, and how very much we owe to him who has kept us, and brought us safely through all the vicissitudes of life, unto the place he has prepared for us. Meanwhile, never let us be forgetful of that mighty goodness which holds us fast, and will not let us go.

**III.** Still I have not done with the text, I have already forestalled my next thought, but I think it requires a special notice. Observe, the apostle adds, "To present us faultless before his presence, WITH EXCEEDING GREAT JOY."

Who will have the joy? My brethren, you will have it. Have you ever mused upon the parable of the Prodigal Son? I know you have; no one can have diligently read the Bible without staying to think over, again and again, of that most tender and instructive of our Lord's parables. Now, I ask Who was happy at that feast? Was not the prodigal, think you? What was the character of those thoughts filling his heart, and making it heave as if it would burst? How overjoyed he must have been. How utterly crushed down with his father's love, and all the unexpected marks of kindness and affection. He had had his days of feasting and sinful merriment, but no songs could ever have been so sweet as those which rung round the old

roof-tree to welcome him home. No viands had ever tasted so delicious as that fatted calf, and no voice of boon companion or witching charmer at his guilty feasts, had ever sounded such dulcet notes in his ears, as those words of his father, "Let us eat and be merry." So will it be with us when we have been restored to ourselves, when wearied of the world, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we shall have been led to the Father's house by the cords of love which the Spirit shall cast around us. When safely brought through all the weary pilgrimage from the far-off country, we shall tread the golden streets and be safe inside the pearly gates, and have the past all gone for ever amongst the things we never shall meet again. What rapture will be ours; this will be heaven indeed. When sin shall be gone, Satan shut out, temptation over for ever, you shall have a joy of which you cannot now conceive. Rivers of pleasure shall flow into your soul; you shall drink such draughts of bliss as your soul has never known this side the grave. Oh, he joyful now with an antipast of the joy which is to be revealed; and afterwards you shall have the fullness of divine bliss for ever and ever. Who shall be happy? Why, the minister will be happy. What pleasure was there in the heart of the shepherd youth David, the son of Jesse, when he had gone forth to do battle with the lion and bear, in order to rescue the lamb out of their jaws, and when God had delivered him and made him successful in his attempt. How gladly he must have watched the little lamb run to the side of its dam, and in the mutual pleasure of these poor dumb animals I am sure he found a joy; and so shall all the shepherds in heaven, all who have been faithful pastors, who have cared for and tended their flocks, shall find a bliss unspeakable in welcoming to glory those darling ones preserved from the power of the devil, "who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." Yes, ministers will be sharers in this happiness. I think we shall have a special joy in bringing our sheaves with us. If it may please God to keep me from falling; if I just get inside the door of heaven, with some of the many thousands that God has given to me as my spiritual children, I will fall prostrate before his feet, the greatest debtor to his mercy that ever lived, and one that has more cause than any other of his creatures to thank him, and ascribe to him glory and honor, dominion and power, for ever and ever. Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me; unto thee be praise. And what will be the joy of angels too? How exceeding great their bliss will be. If there be joy among the angels over one sinner that repenteth, what will there be over ten thousand times ten thousand, not of repenting, but of perfected sinners, cleansed from every stain, set free from every flaw. Oh, ye

cherubim and seraphim, how loud will be your music! How will ye tune your harps anew, how shall every string wake up to the sweetest music in praise of God. "Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof" at the thought of the glorious joy at God's right hand. Who will have joy, I ask again? Why Christ will have the most joy of all. Angels, and ministers, and you yourselves will scarce know such joy as he will have—all his sheep safely folded; every stone of the building placed in its proper position; all the blood-bought and blood-washed ones, all whom the Father gave him, delivered out of time jaw of the lion; all whom line covenanted to redeem effectually saved—his counsel all fulfilled, his stipulations all carried out: the covenant not only ratified, but fulfilled in all its jots and tittles. Verily, none will be so happy as the great Surety in that day. As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall Christ rejoice over you. You know it is written, that "for the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame;" and also, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be abundantly satisfied." Now this satisfaction and joy will be our Lord's, when the whole Church is faultless and complete in the presence of his glory; but not till then. In that hour, when all his jewels are reckoned up and none found missing, he shall rejoice anew in spirit, and shall thank God with yet more of joy than he did when here on earth, and thought of this day in prospect, and by that thought nerved himself for cruel suffering and a death of shame. Yes, Christ will be glad. Our Head will have his share of joy with all the members, and happily he will be able to bear more, as he most certainly deserves and will have more. Who will have joy? Why, God himself will have joy. It is no blasphemy to say that the joy of God on that occasion will be infinite. It is always infinite; but it will be then infinitely displayed before his creatures' gaze. Listen to these words—you cannot fathom them, but you may look at them. It is written, "The Lord thy God will rejoice over thee with joy; he will joy over thee with singing." As I have said on this platform before, I think that is the most wonderful text in the Bible in some respects—God himself singing! I can imagine, when time world was made, the morning stars shouting for joy; but God did not sing. He said it was "very good," and that was all. There was no song. But oh, to think of it, that when all the chosen race shall meet around the throne, the joy of the Eternal Father shall swell so high, that God, who filleth all in all, shall burst out into an infinite, godlike song.

I will only put in this one more thought, that all this, beloved, is about YOU. All this you have a share in, the least in the Church, the poorest in

the family, the humblest believer-this is all true of you, he will keep you from falling, and present you spotless before his presence with exceeding great joy. Oh, cannot you join the song and sing with me, "To the only wise God and Savior be glory and honor, dominion and majesty for ever. Amen."

For my part I feel like that good old saint, who said that if she got to heaven, Jesus Christ should never hear the last of it. Truly he never shall

*"I'll praise my Savior with my breath;  
And when my voice is last in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:  
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,  
While life and thought and being last,  
Or immortality endures."*

I want you to go away with a sense of your own weakness, and yet a belief in your own safety. I want you to know that you cannot stand a minute, that you will be damned within another second unless grace keep you out of hell, and yet I want you to feel that since you are in the hand of Christ you cannot perish, neither can any pluck you out thence. And, poor sinners, my heart's desire is that you may be put into the hand of Christ to-night, that you may have done with trusting yourselves. You can ruin, but you cannot save yourselves. "Oh Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help found:" Christ alone can save you, oh look out of self to Christ; trust yourselves in his hands; he is "able to keep you from falling." You cannot even stand upright yourselves, and if he should set you upright you cannot keep so for a minute without his protecting care. If saints need to be kept, how much more need have you to seek the shelter of the Savior's wounded side: flee thither as the dove to the cleft of the rock. If holy men of God cry daily for pardon, and profess to have no right of themselves to heaven, how much more urgent is your case. You must perish if you die as you are. You can never make yourself faultless, but Christ can. He wants to do it: he has opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness: wash and be clean. Again, I say, look to Jesus. Away with self and cling to Christ, down with self-confidence and up with simple faith in Christ Jesus. I shall not let you go, dear friends, without singing one verse, which I think will express the feeling of each one of us:



*“Let me among thy saints be found  
Whene’er the Archangel’s trump shall sound,  
To see thy smiling face;  
Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,  
While heaven’s resounding mansions ring  
With shouts of sovereign grace.”*

# ARE YOU PREPARED TO DIE?

NO. 635

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

## AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON

*“How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” — Jeremiah 12:5.*

CANAAN may be considered as a type of two states or conditions in the Christian's life. It was the land of rest to the children of Israel after a weary pilgrimage in the wilderness. Now it is written that “we who believe do enter into rest.” A true Christian possessed of strong faith will not have a wilderness state on earth so much as a land flowing with milk and honey, because his faith will give him the substance of things hoped for, and he the evidence of things not seen. Many disciples live a life of depression, wretchedness, and discomfort, which would be completely changed if they had faith in God, and lived a higher life of devotedness and love. Canaan may be fairly considered as a type of that better state of Christianity which some enjoy. It is not altogether free from ills; the Canaanite dwells in the land, and there are wars and fightings still; but there is rest, and there is the spirit of service developing itself in the cultivation of the promised land. But Canaan is generally used to shadow forth “the rest which remaineth for the people of God” beyond the skies. Heaven is thus frequently described as corresponding to the earthly inheritance of the Jews. It is our hope, the end of our pilgrimage. It contains our Jerusalem, and the temple “not made with hands.” When this is the view taken of the type, then Jordan is not unnaturally likened unto death. Its dark waters are made to picture forth to our minds the chill stream through which we wade in the dying hour. It is a beautiful emblem, and we have all doubtless often sung Dr. Watts's hymn with much feeling-

*“There is land of pure delight,  
“Where saints immortal reign;  
Infinite day excludes the night,  
And pleasures banish pain.*

*There everlasting spring abides,  
And never-withering flowers;  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heavenly land from ours."*

Taking "the swelling of Jordan" to represent the precise time of death, the question really is, what shall we do when we come to die? "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

**I.** We notice, in the first place, that this is an EXCEEDINGLY PRACTICAL QUESTION.

How wilt thou do? is the enquiry. There are some subjects which are more or less matters of pure faith and personal feeling; and though all Christian doctrines bear more or less directly upon the Christian life, yet they are not what is commonly meant by practical subjects. Our text, however, brings us face to face with a matter which is essentially a matter of doing and of acting: it asks how we mean to conduct ourselves in the hour of death. We sometimes hear the remark made by those who object to doctrinal preaching, that we are too speculative, and utter our own opinions, which feed men's fancies, but do not regulate the life. Now we believe that every promise leads to a precept, and every doctrine has its duty; so we will not admit the justice of the insinuation even if we did preach doctrine entirely to the exclusion of the commandments, which we emphatically deny; but here we have at any rate a topic practical enough, I am only afraid it will be a little too much so for some; they will turn it into a sentiment and a feeling, and not act upon it so as to put it into practice, and exemplify its power in after days. Christians may differ from me on some points, but I am sure that here we are united in belief—we must die, and ought not to die unprepared. There is a divergence of opinion as to what we ought to do at the commencement of Christian life; I maintain that we ought to follow Christ, and he immersed in water, "for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness;" others oppose that as being unnecessary, inexpedient, or what not; we differ at the beginning of life, but we agree in the end; we must die; and we all want to die the death of the righteous, and to have our last end like his.

**II.** We notice, in the second place, that it is UNDOUBTEDLY A PERSONAL QUESTION.

How wilt thou do? It individualises us, and makes us each one to come face to face with a dying hour. Now we all need this, and it will be well for each one of us to look for a minute into the grave. We are too apt to regard all men as mortal but ourselves. Somehow we can see frailty of life, as well as all the other frailties which we possess in common, much more clearly in other people than we can in ourselves. We are blind to our own weakness far too much, and shall do well to ask ourselves, each of us, "My soul, how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" "The ancient warrior who wept because before a hundred years were passed, he knew his immense army would be gone, and not a man remain behind to tell the tale, would have been wiser, if he had wept also for himself, and left alone his bloody wars, and lived as a man who must one day die, and find after death a day of judgment. Each one of you must die. If I were addressing an assembly of the sages of the world, I should say, "All your combined wisdom cannot lengthen out the days of one of you even a single minute. You may reckon the distance of the stars, and weigh worlds, but you cannot tell me when one of you will die, nor how many grains of sand are left behind in the hour-glass of time, which shows the exit of each spirit from the world." I say now to you, the wisest of you must die; and you know not but that you may die ere long. So with the mightiest, and the richest of men. Samson was mastered by a stronger than man, and the wealthiest of men cannot bribe death to stay his dart for a single hour. We all come into the world one by one, and will go out of it also alone. Loved ones come to the brink of the dark stream, but there they shake hands and say "farewell," and we go on alone. The prophet's companion and successor followed his master till the fiery chariot came to take his leader away; but when the messengers of God came, they left the servant behind, vainly crying, "My father, My father; the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." We had better therefore take the question up as individuals, seeing that it is one in which we shall be dealt with singly, and be unable then to claim or use the help of an earthly friend. I put to the young, to the old; to the rich, to the poor; to each one of this vast assembly-I put it, as if we were alone before our God-"How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

**III.** As a third thought, we call attention to the fact that it is one of the MOST SOLEMN questions.

Death and life are stern and awful realities. To say that anything "is a matter of life and death," is to bring one of the most emphatic and solemn

subjects under our notice. Now, the question we are considering this morning is of this character, and we must deal with it as it becomes us, when we investigate a subject involving the everlasting interest of souls. The question is of infinite importance to all, but there are some whose ease is manifestly such, that they need to gird up the loins of their minds and address themselves to its consideration, with intensest thought and care. Let me call attention to one or two cases, for while I wish to stir up all, I am bidden to have especial compassion on some, making a difference, so that I may pluck them as brands out of the fire. I have been curious enough to think that I should like to ask that question of a Jew, of one who rejects Christ as the Messiah. "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" According to the law, and it is that under which every Jew is born, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Now there never was, and never will be any man who did, or could "continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them," and consequently every man becomes accursed; and it must be a dreadful thing for a man to think of dying under the curse and ban of his own religious faith; and yet every Jew is so, cursed by his own book of law, accursed for ever. What comfort will that yield him when he comes to the swelling of Jordan, I have thought too, that I should like to ask the atheist, the unbeliever, this question, "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" He tells me, perhaps, that he believes in annihilation: he will want comfort when he is lying upon that last weary bed; will he get it out of that well? The dreary blank of total destruction, of ceasing to be; is there anything to help a spirit when it lies where it most wants consolation, tossing to and fro in pain and weakness? I think not. I should like also to put the question to a Roman Catholic; for how will he do "in the swelling of Jordan?" Some time ago you will remember a Prince of the Catholic Church departed: where did he go? I am not versed in such matters, and should not like to judge anybody's soul, but on the coffin of the Cardinal we find a request that we would pray for his soul, and there have been masses said for its repose. It is evident, therefore, that the Cardinal's soul went somewhere, where it wants praying for, and to some place where it is not in repose. Now if this is to be the lot for a Cardinal Archbishop, there is but a poor look-out for an ordinary professor of the same faith; if a prince in the Church dies, and goes not to heaven as we have been hoping, not to eternal rest, but to a place where he needs our intercession, and where he has no repose for his soul, why then it must be dreadful work to die with such a creed as that. I would sooner have beneath my head the

most prickly thornbush, than have that for my dying pillow. Oh, we want something better than this, a hope more rapturous, more divine, more full of immortality than the certainty of going to a place where there is no repose, and where our souls need the prayers of sinful men on earth. But I do not know that we have very much to do with any of these, they must “gang their am gait,” they must go their own way; and if they be found wrong at the last, we are sorry that it should be so, but our own business is certainly the first matter in hand. Therefore, forgetting them, let the question come to each of us, “How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”

**IV.** Remember, in the fourth place, that this question was put by way of REBUKE to the prophet Jeremiah.

He seems to have been a little afraid of the people among whom he dwelt. They had evidently persecuted him very much, mocked at him, and laughed him to scorn; but God tells him to make his face like flint, and not to care for them, for, says he, If thou art afraid of them, “How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” This ought to be a rebuke to every Christian who is subject to the fear of man. I do not believe that any preacher will be long in his pulpit without having the temptation to be afraid of some man or another; and if he doth not stand very firmly upon his integrity he will find some of the best of his friends getting the upper hand with him. And this will never do with God’s minister. He must deal out God’s Word impartially to rich or poor, to good or bad; and he must determine to have no master except his Master who is in heaven; no bit nor bridle for his mouth, except that of prudence and discretion, which God himself shall put there. For if we are afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man that is crushed before the moth, how fearful shall we be when we have to talk with the grim king of terrors! If we are afraid of puny man, how shall we be able to face it out before the dread ordeal of the day of judgment? Yet I know some Christians that are very much abashed by the world’s opinion, by the opinion of their family circle, or of the workshop. Now what does it matter after all? There is an old proverb, that “he is a great fool that is laughed out of his coat;” and there was an improvement on it, that “he was a greater fool who was laughed out of his skin;” and there is another, that “he is the greatest fool of all who is laughed out of his soul.” He that will be content to be damned in order to be fashionable, pays dear indeed for what he gets. Oh, to dare to be singular, if to be singular is to be right; but if you are afraid of man, what will you do in the swelling of Jordan? The same rebuke might be applied to us when we get fretful under the little

troubles of life. You have losses in business, vexatious in the family-you have all crosses to carry-but my text comes to you, and it says, "If you cannot bear this, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan? If your religion is not equal to the ordinary emergencies of common days, what will you do when you get to that extraordinary day, which will be to you the most important day of your being?" Come friends, be not bowed down with these things, bear them cheerfully, since there is much sterner work to do than any that you have met with in the battle of life. And the same reproof might come to us when we get petulant under pains of body, for there are some of us, who as soon as ever we get a little unwell, become so fretful, that those like us best who are farthest from us; we can scarcely have a little depression of spirit, but straightway we are ready to give up all for lost, and like Jonah say, "We do well to be angry even unto death." Now this ought not to be. We should quit ourselves like men, and not be perturbed with these little rivulets; for if these sweep us away, what shall we do when Jordan is swollen to the brim, and we have to pass through that? When one of the martyrs, whose name is the somewhat singular one of Pommily, was confined previous to his burning, his wife was also taken up upon the charge of heresy. She, good woman, had resolved to die with her husband, and she appeared, as far as most people could judge, to be very firm in her faith. But the jailer's wife, though she had no religion, took a merciful view of the case as far as she could do so, and thought, "I am afraid this woman will never stand the test, she will never burn with her husband, she has neither faith nor strength enough to endure the trial;" and therefore, one day calling her out from her cell, she said to her, "Lass, run to the garden and fetch me the key that lies there." The poor woman ran willingly enough; she took the key up and it burned her fingers, for the jailer's wife had made it red hot; she came running back crying with pain. "Ay, wench," said she, "if you cannot bear a little burn in your hand, how will you bear to be burned in your whole body;" and this, I am sorry to add, was the means of bringing her to recant the faith which she professed, but which never had been in her heart. I apply the story thus: If we cannot bear the little trifling pangs which come upon us in our ordinary circumstances, which are but as it were the burning of your hands, what shall we do when every pulse beats pain, and every throb is an agony, and the whole tenement begins to crumble about the spirit that is so soon to be disturbed? Come, let us pluck up courage! We have to fight the giant yet! Let us not be afraid of these dwarfs! Let the ordinary trials of every day be laughed to scorn! In the strength of divine grace, let us sing with our poet,

*“Weak as I am, yet through thy strength,  
I all things can perform.”*

For if we cannot bear these, how will we do in the swelling of Jordan? This is what the text was originally meant to teach. We will now use it for a further purpose.

**V.** The question may be put as A MATTER OF CAUTION.

In this assembly there are some who have no hope, no faith in Christ Now I think, if they will look within at their own experience, they will find that already they are by no means completely at ease. The pleasures of this world are very sweet; but how soon they cloy, if they do not sicken the appetite. After the night of merriment there is often the morning of regret. “Who hath woe? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.” It is an almost universal confession that the joys of earth promise more than they perform, and that in looking back upon them, the wisest must confess with Solomon, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Now if these things seem to be vanity while you are in good bodily health, how will they look when you are in sickness? If vanity while you can enjoy them, what will they appear when you must say farewell to them all? If it was vanity to the rich man while he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, what greater vanity it must have been when it was said, “This night thy soul shall he required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?” How wilt thou do in Jordan when these joys shall vanish, and there shall be a dreary blank before thee? Moreover, you feel already that conscience pricks you. You cannot live without God and he perfectly easy, unless you are one of those few who are given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. You could not take an hour quietly to think about yourself and your state, and yet go to your bed easily. You know right well that the only way some of you can keep up peace of mind at all, is by going from one gay assembly to another, and from one party of frolic to another, or else from business to business, and from care to care. Your poor soul, like the infant which is to be cast into Moloch’s arms, cries, and you do not hear its cries, because you drown it with the noisy drums of this world’s pleasures and cares; but still you are not at rest: there is a worm in your fair fruit, there are dregs at the bottom of your sweetest cups, and you know it. Now, if even now you are not perfectly at peace; if in this land of peace wherein you have trusted you are getting weary of these things, then “how



wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" Moreover, you sometimes have, if I mistake not, very strange apprehensions. I have known some of the most reckless sinners who have had fearful times, when nobody could cheer them; when a certain fearful looking for of judgment has haunted them. The most superstitious people in the world are those who are the most profane. It is a strange thing that there is always that weak point about those who seem to be most hardened. But you that are not thus hardened, you know that you dare not look forward to death with any pleasure-you cannot: to go to the grave is never very joyous work with you. Ay, and if you were certain that there could be no more death, it would be the best news that you had ever heard; whereas to some of us it would be the worst that could ever come. Ah, well! if the very thought of death is bitter, what will the reality be? and if to gaze at it from a distance be too hard a thing for your mind, what will it be to pass under its yoke, to go through its dark valley, to feel its dart, to know that the poison is rankling in your veins? What will you do? "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" Well, I shall not describe what you will do, though I have seen it, and you must have seen it too. Sometimes a man dies at ease, like a sheep, because he has been dosed with the laudanum of self-confidence. At other times the man is awaked, and sees the dreadful doom to which death is driving him, and starts back and shrinks from the wrath to come, and cries and shrieks, and perhaps swears that he will not die; and yet die he must, dragged down to that place where he must lift up his eyes to see nothing that can give him hope-nothing that can take away the sharpness of his anguish. I leave that point. God make it a caution to many now present. Some of you men and women here may be nearer death than you dream of. I would you would answer the question, "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

**VI.** But now I intend to use the question as EXCITING MEDITATION in the breasts of those who have given their hearts to Christ, and who consequently are prepared to die whenever the summons may come. Well, what do we mean to do, how shall we behave ourselves when we come to die? I sat down to try and think this matter over, but I cannot, in the short time allotted to me, even give you a brief view of the thoughts that passed through my mind. I began thus, "How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?" Well, as a believer in Christ, perhaps. I may never come there at all, for there are some that will be alive and remain at the coming of the Son of Man, and these will never die. For so says the Apostle: "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment,

in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." This thought we wish to keep ever before us. My real hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I would far rather see the Master return than see the messenger Death. I regulate my life as one who is looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Son of Man. I will not pay more attention to the servant than to the Lord of all. "Come, Lord Jesus! yea, come quickly," is the prayer of our hearts continually; and as the bride of Christ, we ought to have our hearts filled with rapture at the thought of his return to claim us as his own. If he send for us, "It is well;" but best of all if he come himself again the second time without sin unto salvation. A sweet truth, which we place first in our meditation. I may not sleep, but I must and shall be changed. Then I thought again, "How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?" I may go through it in the twinkling of an eye. Remember that good man, who some time ago was getting ready to preach as usual, but the sermon was never delivered on earth, I mean the President of the Wesleyan Conference; how speedily was he taken to his rest; and how happy it is just to close one's eyes on earth, and open them in heaven. Such also was the death of one of God's aged servants, Mr. Alleine, who had battled well for the truth. He was suddenly taken ill, and was advised to retire to bed. "No," said he, "but I will die in my chair; and I am not afraid to die." He sat down, and only had time to say, "My life is hid with Christ in God," and he closed his eyes with his own hands and fell on sleep. When Ananias, a martyr, knelt to lay his white head upon the block, it was said to him as he closed his eyes to receive the stroke, "Shut thine eyes a little, old man, and immediately thou shalt see the light of God." I could envy such a calm departing. Sudden death, sudden glory; taken away in Elijah's chariot of fire, with the horses driven at the rate of lightning, so that the spirit scarcely knows that it has left the clay, before it sees the brightness of the beatific vision. Well, that may take away some of the alarm of death, the thought that we may not be even a moment in the swelling of Jordan. Then again, I thought, if I must pass through the swelling of Jordan, yet the real act of death takes no time. We hear of suffering on a dying bed; the suffering is all connected with life, it is not death. The actual thing called death, as far as we know of, does not cost a pang; it is the life that is in us, that makes us suffer, but death gives one kind pin's-prick, and it is all over. Moreover, if I pass through the swelling of Jordan, I may do so without suffering any pain. A dying bed is sometimes very painful; with certain diseases, and especially with strong men, it is often hard for the body and soul to part asunder. But it has been my happy lot to see some deaths so extremely pleasing, that I

could not help remarking, that it were worth while living, only for The sake of dying as some have died. We have seen consumption for instance; how gently it takes down the frame very often; how quietly the soul departs; and in old age, and debility, how easily the spirit seems. to get away from the cage that was broken, which only needed one blow, and the imprisoned bird flies straight away to its eternal resting-place.

Well, then, as I cannot tell in what physical state I may be when I come to die, I just tried to think again, how shall I do in the swelling of Jordan? I hope I shall do as others have done before me, who have built on the same rock, and had the same promises to be their succor. They cried, "Victory!" So shall I, and after that die quietly and in peace. If the same transporting scene may not be mine, I will at least lay my head upon my Savior's bosom, and breathe my life out gently there. You have a right, Christian, to expect that as other Christians die so shall you. How will you die? Why, you will die as your sainted mother did; you will die as your father did; when the time came for the "silver cord to be loosed and the golden bowl to be broken, for the pitcher to be broken at the fountain and the wheel broken at the cistern," the pitcher was broken and the cord loosed, and their spirits went to God who gave them. How will you die? Why, as I mused on this I took down my little book of "Promises," for I thought, I shall certainly do as God says I shall. Well, how is that? "When thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee." And again, "Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." And again, "He shall swallow up death in victory." And again, "He shall make all thy bed in thy sickness;" and yet again, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God; I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." You know what a many dying pillows God has made for his dear people in the hour of their departure. "How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?" Why, do manfully, do patiently, if God shall keep his promise as we know he will.

Now let me speak to you all again-I mean you that are in Christ. "How will you do in the swelling of Jordan?" Why, you will do as a man does who has had a long day's walk, and he can see his home. You will clap your hands. You will sit down upon the next milestone with the tears in your eyes, and wipe the sweat from your face and say, "It is well, it is over. Oh how happy it is to see my own roof-tree, and the place where my best friends, my kindred dwell. I shall soon be at. home-at home for ever with the Lord." How will you do? Why we will do as a soldier does when the

battle is fought; he takes off his armor, stretches himself out at length to rest. The battle is all over. He for- gets his wound, and reckons up the glory of the victory and the reward which follows. So will we do. We will begin to forget the wounds, and the garments rolled in blood, and we will think of the “crown of life that fadeth not away.” How will we do in the swelling of Jordan? We will do as men do when they launch for a foreign country. They look back upon those they leave behind, and wave their handkerchiefs as long as they can get sight of them; but they are soon gone. And we will bid adieu to dear ones; they shall have the tears, but we shall have the joy, for we go to the islands of the blest, the land of the hereafter, the home of the sanctified, to dwell with God for ages. Who will weep when he starts on such a voyage, and launches on such a blessed sea! What will we do when we come into the swelling of Jordan? Why methinks, dear friends, we shall then begin to see through the veil, and to enjoy the paradise of the blessed which is ours for ever. We will make that dying bed a throne, and we will sit and reign there with Christ Jesus. We will think of that river Jordan as being one tributary of the river of life which flows at the foot of the jasper throne of the Most High. We will live in the land of Beulah on the edge of Jordan, with our feet in the cold stream, singing of the better land. We will hear the songs of angels, as celestial breezes bring them across the narrow stream. And sometimes we will have in our bosom some of the spices from the Mountains of Myrrh, which Christ shall give us across the river. And when we come to die, what will we do in the swelling of Jordan? Why we will try and bear our dying testimony.

*“My joyful soul on Jordan’s shore,  
Shall raise one Ebenezer more.”*

Oh, that was a grand thing when Joshua said to the twelve men, “Take up twelve stones, and set them down in the midst of Jordan where the priests’ feet stood still, and take up twelve other stones and set them up on the other side of Jordan, where the children of Israel first trod the promised shore.” You and I will do this, we will leave twelve stones in the midst of Jordan. They shall tell our friends and kindred here of the good words we said, the adieux we gave them, and the joyful hopes which cheered us, the song we sang when death began to stay our throat. And then we will raise another Ebenezer in heaven. There shall be twelve stones there that will tell the angels and the principalities, of the love which cleft the Jordan, and brought us through it as on dry land. This is how we will do in the swelling

of Jordan. We are not looking forward to death with any fear, with any dread. When we get home to-night, we shall begin to take off our garments one by one. We shall not shed a tear. Nor shall we when we come to die.

*“Since Jesus is mine, I will not fear undressing,  
But gladly put off these garments of clay;  
To die in the Lord is a comfort and blessing,  
Since Jesus to glory thro’ death led the way.”*

This is how we shall do in the swelling of Jordan. Take off our garments to put on the celestial robes. As the bridegroom longeth for the marriage day, and as the bride waiteth until she is joined unto her husband in wedlock, even so our spirits wait for God. As the exile panteth to be delivered, and the galley-slave to be separated from his oar, so wait we to be set free for glory and immortality. As she that mourns her absent lord pines for his return, as the child longeth to reach his father’s house and to see his father’s face, so do we.

*“My heart is with him on his throne,  
And ill can brook delay,  
Each moment listening for his voice,  
‘Make haste and come away.’”*

I must finish, for time has gone. But I meant to have said a word or two by way of warning. I can only do so now briefly, abridging them and compressing the thoughts as tightly as I can. “How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” may be well used by way of warning. I think, dear friends, you ought to ask yourselves one question. Some of you never think of dying, and yet you should. You say you may live long: you may, and you may not. If there were a great number of loaves upon this table, and you were to eat one every day; if you were told that one of those loaves had poison in it, I think you would begin every one with great caution; and knowing that one of them would be your death, you would take each up with silent dread. Now you have so many days, and in one of these days there is the poison of death. I do not know which one. It may be in to-morrow; it may not be until many a day has gone. But I think you ought to handle all your days with holy jealousy. Is not that a fair parable? If it be, then let me ask you to think upon the question, “How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” You grant that you will die, and you may die soon. Is it not foolish to be living in this world without a thought of what you will do at last? A man goes into an inn, and as soon as he sits down he

begins to order his wine, his dinner, his bed; there is no delicacy in season which he forgets to bespeak, there is no luxury which he denies himself. He stops at the inn for some time. By-and-by there comes in a bill, and he says, "Oh, I never thought of that-I never thought of that!" "Why," says the landlord, "here is a man who is either a born fool or else a knave. What! never thought of the reckoning-never thought of settling-day!" And yet this is how -some of you live. You have this, and that, and the other thing in this world's inn (for it is nothing but an inn), and you have soon to go your way, and yet you have never thought of settling-day! "Well," says one, "I was casting up my accounts this morning." Yes, I remember a minister making this remark when he heard of one that cast up his accounts on Sunday. He said, "I hope that is not true, sir." "Yes," he said, "I do cast up my accounts on Sunday." "Ah, well," he said, the day of judgment will be spent in a similar manner-in casting up accounts, and it will go ill with those people who found no other time in which to serve themselves except the time which was given them that they serve God." You have either been a dishonest man, or else you must be supremely foolish, to be spending every day in this world's inn, and yet to be ignoring the thought of the great day of account. But remember, though you forget it, God forgets not. Every day is adding to the score. Photographed in heaven is every action that you perform. Your very thoughts are photographed upon the eternal mind; and in the day when the book shall be opened it will go ill with you. Perhaps you will say, as one did in the Book of Kings, "Well, I was busy here and there"; "I was looking after my family and my property; I was looking after politics; I was seeing after such-and-such an investment; and my soul is gone." Yes, but that would not bring it back again. And what shall it profit you, though you gain the whole world and lose your own soul. It is no business of mine what becomes of you, except this, that I do desire so to talk with you at all times, that if you perish it may not be laid at my door. What would you say to that soldier who should be told by his commanding officer to fight with the foe on the field of battle, and the so-called soldier were to reply "I don't know any thing about battle or fighting; I never thought of the battle field, I can do anything but fight!" The general would be sorely amazed. He would want to know what the soldier lived for, if it were not to fight and defend his country in the hour of his country's need. What do we live for, if it is not to prepare for a hereafter life, and for the day for which all days were made? What, are we sent into this world and told that we are to "prepare to meet our God," and we do every thing else but the one thing: this will

not be wise; and when the Lord of the whole earth shall come out of his place to judge the sons of men, bitterly shall we rue our folly. Be wise now, remember this, and consider your latter end. What words shall I use to urge you to consider the subject and take my warning. Is heaven a place you would like to enter? Is hell a place you would like to avoid, or will you make your bed in it for ever? Are you in love with eternal misery that you run to it so madly? Oh, stop; turn ye! turn ye! why will ye die? I do pray you stop and consider. Consideration does no man harm. Second thoughts here are for the best. Think and think, and think again, and oh, may God lead you, through thinking, to feel your danger, and may you then accept that gracious remedy which is in Christ Jesus; for whosoever believeth in him is not condemned, whosoever trusts in Christ is saved. Sin is forgiven, the soul is accepted, the spirit is blessed the moment it trusts the Savior.

Before I close the subject, I must guide your thoughts to what is the true preparation for death. Three things present themselves to my mind as being our duty in connection with the dying hour. First seek to be washed in the Red Sea of the dear Redeemer's blood, come in contact with the death of Christ, and by faith in it you will be prepared to meet your own. Without giving an opinion upon the merit of that system of medicine which professes to cure diseases by producing an effect upon the system akin to the original malady, or as they put it, "like curing like;" we recommend it in spiritual things; come into union with Christ's death, and that will take away the evil and sting of your own. Be buried with him in baptism unto death, and have part with him in the reality symbolized in that blest ordinance, and you will not dread Jordan's swellings, if the full tide of the Redeemer's blood has rolled over you, so that you are washed and clean. If guilt be on your conscience, it will be as a millstone round your neck and you will sink to endless woe; but if the love of Jesus be in your heart, it will buoy up your head and keep you safe, so that although heart and flesh fail you, you will have God to be the strength of your heart and your portion for ever. Again, learn of the Apostle Paul to "die daily." Practise the duty of self-denial and mortifying of the flesh till it shall become a habit with you, and when you have to lay down the flesh and part with everything, you will be only continuing the course of life you have pursued all along. No wonder if dying should prove hard work if you are completely unused to it in thought and expectation. If death comes to me as a stranger, I may be startled, but if I have prepared myself to receive him, he may come and knock at my door and I shall say, "I am ready to go with you, for I have

been expecting you all my life.” How beautiful this expression of the Apostle, “I am ready to be offered up and the time of my departure is at hand.” He was waiting for death as for a friend, and when it came, I am sure he was well pleased to go. He tells us he had” a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.” Even so may we learn to look at the time when we shall hear the summons, “Come up higher,” as to a time to be longed for rather than dreaded. Learn to submit your will to

God’s will daily. Learn to endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross, so that when the last conflict comes it may find you able by the grace of God to bear the brunt of the final contest with unflinching courage. And as the last preparation for the end of life, I should advise a continual course of active service and obedience to the command of God. I have frequently thought that no happier place to die in could he found than one’s post of duty. If I were a soldier, I think I should like to die as Wolfe died, with victory shouting in my ear, or as Nelson died in the midst of his greatest success. Preparation for death does not mean going alone into the chamber and retiring from the world, but active service, “doing the duty of the day in the day.” The best preparation for sleep, the healthiest soporific, is hard work, and one of the best things to prepare us for sleeping in Jesus, is to live in him an active life of going about doing good. The attitude in which I wish death to find me is, with light trimmed, and loins girt, waiting and watching; at work, doing my allotted task, and multiplying my talent for the master’s glory. Idlers may not anticipate rest, but workers will not be unwilling to welcome the hour which shall hear the words, “It is finished.” Keep your eye upon the recompense of the reward. Lay up treasures in heaven, and thus will you be ready to cross the stream and enter the loved land, whither heart and treasure have gone beforehand, to prepare the way. Washed in the blood of Christ, accustomed to submit to whatever God wills, and to find our pleasure in doing his will on earth as we hope to do it in heaven, joined to a life of holy service, and I am persuaded that we shall be prepared with one of old to say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,” and with him, calmly and joyfully to anticipate the crown which fadeth not away. God bring you to this point, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.



## TO MY READERS

*DEAR FRIENDS,*

Refreshed in body and mind, I am on my way homeward to my pulpit and my work. I trust that my absence from labor, so profitable to my own health, may prove to be no loss to you, from the stores which I have gathered in my travelling. It is no small strain upon a man's mental powers to preach to the same people, and to publish the sermons for eleven years consecutively; in time the mind which continually labors ceases to be fresh and vigorous, and craves for rest. The soil without fallow, grows poor. Rest is true medicine. That rest, I bless God, I have been enabled to enjoy in the most agreeable and instructive manner, and trust that it will enable me, by Divine assistance, to avoid the sameness and repetition which are sure signs of exhaustion of mind, and poverty of thought, and are certain ere long to render a ministry barren and unprofitable. To be in the very best condition to be used of God is my heart's desire. I would be a bow well-strung an arrow sharpened by the King. He who works for God should seek to do his work well, and should strive to be fit for labor. To feed the saints, and gather in Christ's blood-bought wanderers is my highest ambition resting or working, my eye is on this. The most indefatigable must sometimes submit to rest, in order to avoid being laid aside altogether; but work is the happiest and best state for believers; and I feel that it is so. Oh that we, like the spirits before the throne, could serve God day and night, without sin or ceasing.

May I beg a continued interest in my readers' earnest prayers; and may I hope that if ever they receive a blessing in reading my discourses, they will kindly introduce them to their friends and neighbors. Yours to serve in the Gospel,

Bell Alp, Switzerland, June 16th, 1865

*C. H. SPURGEON.*

# THE CHURCH'S LOVE TO HER LOVING LORD.

NO. 636

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?” —

Song of Solomon 1:7.

We shall need to lift up our hearts to God and ask to be quickened in grace, or the precious truths in our text will not prove to us “as honey out of the rock,” nor the “least of fat things, of wine and marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.” We cannot appreciate the spirituality of this book, unless God’s Spirit shall help us. Many read these words and only see a proof of the imaginative power of an eastern mind. Some read to scoff and blaspheme, and others, even good people, neglect to read this book altogether, being unable to drink in its spirit because of their want of that higher life of communion with the Beloved, which is here so beautifully laid open to our view. Now I am persuaded better things of you beloved. I am sure that you believe that every word of God is precious, and most certainly we say of this book, “it is more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey, or the droppings of the honeycomb.” This book of the Canticles is most precious to us, it is the inner court of the temple of truth. It seems to us to belong to the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High. We see our Savior’s face in almost every page of the Bible, but here we see his heart and feel his love to us. We shall hope this morning to speak of our own experience, as well as of the Church who is here speaking. You will perceive that she begins with a title, she expresses a desire, she enforces it with an argument: “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest

thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?"

**I.** We commence with the title: "O thou whom my soul loveth." It is well to be able to call the Lord Jesus Christ by this name without an "if," or a "but." A very large proportion of Christian people can only say of Christ that they hope they love him; they trust they love him; but this is a very poor and shallow experience which is content to stay here. It seems to me that no one ought to give any rest to his spirit till he feels quite sure about a matter of such vital importance. We are not content to have a hope of the love of our parents, or of our spouse, or of our children; we feel we must be certain there; and we ought not to be satisfied with a hope that Christ loves us, and with a bare trust that we love him. The old saints did not generally speak with buts, and ifs, and hopes, and trusts, but they spoke positively and plainly. "I know whom I have believed," saith Paul. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," saith Job. "He whom my soul loveth," saith Solomon, in the song as we have it here. Learn, dear friends, to get that positive knowledge of your love to Jesus, and be not satisfied till you can talk about your interest in him as a reality, which you have made infallibly sure by having received the witness of the Holy Spirit, and his seal upon your soul by faith, that you are born of God, and belong to Christ.

Speaking then of this title which rings the great bell of love to Jesus, let us notice first the cause, and secondly the effect of that love. If we can look into the face of him who once sweat great drops of blood, and call him, "O thou whom my soul loveth," it is interesting to consider what is the cause of our love. And here our reply is very quick. The efficient cause of our love is the Holy Spirit of God. We should never have had a spark of love to Jesus if it had not been bestowed upon us by the divine worker. Well said John, "Love is of God." Certainly it is so. Our love to Christ is one beam from himself, the Sun. Certainly a man can no more naturally love Christ than a horse can fly. I grant you there is no physical disability, but there is a moral and spiritual disability which effectually disqualifies him from the high and lofty emotion of love to Jesus. Into that dead corpse the living spirit must be breathed; for those who are dead in trespasses and sins cannot love Christ. That heart of stone must be transformed into a heart of flesh, for stones may be hurled at the Savior, but they can never love him. That lion must become a lamb, or it can never claim Christ as its Shepherd. That raven must be turned into a dove, or it will never fly to Christ as its ark. "Except a man be born again," we may say, he cannot see this

precious sparkling jewel of the kingdom of God, love to Christ. Search yourselves then, brethren, do you love him or not, for if you love him, you have been born again; and if you do not love him, then you are still in darkness, and are not his.

*“Can you pronounce his charming name,  
His acts of kindness tell;  
And while you dwell upon the theme,  
No sweet emotion feel?”*

I think some of us would have to answer-

*“A very wretch, Lord, I should prove,  
Had I no love to thee;  
Sooner than not my Savior love,  
Oh, may I cease to be!”*

This, then, is the efficient cause-the Holy Spirit. The rational cause, the logical reason why we love Jesus lies in himself-in his looks, in his present working, and in his person, besides many other little founts, which all tend to swell the river-the growing, deepening river of our love to him.

Why do we love Jesus? We have the best of answers-because he first loved us. Hearken, ye strangers who inquire why we should love the Savior so. We will give you such reasons that we will satisfy you and set your mouths watering to be partakers of the same reasons, that you may come to love him too. Why do we love him? Because ever this round earth was fashioned between the palms of the great Creator-before he had painted the rainbow, or hung out the lights of the sun and moon, Christ's delights were with us. He foresaw us through the glass of his prescience; he knew what we should be-looked into the book in which all his “members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them;” and as he looked upon us, the glance was love. He delighted to sit upon the throne of glory, and to remember his dear ones who were yet to be born. It was the great prospect which his mighty and infinite Spirit had-a joy that was set before him, that he should see a multitude that no man could number who should be his beloved for ever.

*“Lov'd of my Christ, for him again,  
With love intense I'll burn;  
Chosen of Thee ere time began,  
I choose Thee in return.”*

Oh, could you know that Jesus had loved you from before all worlds, you must love him. At least you will grant there cannot be a better reason for love than love. Love demands; nay, it does not demand- it takes by almighty force, by irresistible energy, that heart captive upon whom it thus sets itself.

This Jesus loved us for no reason whatever in ourselves. We were black as the tents of Kedar; we had much deformity but no beauty, and yet he loved us; and our deformity was of such a kind that it might meritoriously have made him hate us. We kicked against him and despised him. Our language naturally was, "We will not have this man to reign over us," and when we heard of his loving us, we sneered at it. He was despised and rejected of men; we hid as it were, our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not. We thought his love an empty tale, a paltry trifle, and yet he loved us. Nay, we were his enemies. We slew him; we confess with sorrow that we were the murderers of the Prince of Life and Glory. Our hands were stained with his gore and our garments dyed with his blood, and yet he saw all this and loved us still. Shall we not love him? Sure our heart is harder than adamant, because we do not love him more. But it were hell-hardened steel if it did not love at all. Our Savior so loved us that he stripped himself of his robes of radiance. Listen, ye children of God, it is the old story over again, but it is always new to you. He stripped himself of his bright array, laid aside his scepter and his crown, and became an infant in Bethlehem's manger amongst the horned oxen. Thirty years of poverty and shame the King of heaven spent among the sons of men, and all out of love to us. Jesus the heavenly lover, panting to redeem his people, was content to abide here without a place whereon to rest his head, that he might rescue you. See him yonder in the garden in his agony, his soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death; his forehead, nay his head, his hair, his garments red with the bloody sweat. See him giving his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that pluck off the hair. See him as he hides not his face from shame and spitting, dumb like a sheep before her shearers, and like a lamb that is brought to the slaughter, so he opened not his mouth, but patiently bore it all on our behalf. See him with the cross upon his mangled shoulders, staggering through Jerusalem's streets, unwept, unpitied, except by poor feeble women! See him, ye that love him, and love him more as he stretches out his hands to the nail, and gives his feet to the iron. See him, as with power to deliver himself he is made captive. Behold him as they lift up the cross with him upon it and dash it

down into its place and dislocate his bones. Hear that cry, “I am poured out like water: all my bones are out of joint, Thou hast brought me into the dust of death.” Stand, if ye can, and view that face so full of dolor. Look till a sword shall go through your own heart as it went through his virgin mother’s very soul. Oh, see him as he thirsts and has that thirst mocked with vinegar. Hear him as he prays and has that prayer parodied, “He cries for Elias, let Elias come and take him down.” See him, as they who love him come and kiss his feet and bathe them with their tears. Will you not love him who did all that friend could do for friend; who gave his life for us? Beloved, here are a thousand crimson cords that tie us to the Savior, and I hope we feel their constraining power. It is his vast love, the old eternal bond, the love which redeemed, which suffered in our stead, the love which pleaded our cause before the eternal throne: it is this which we give as a sufficient reason why we should love the Savior, if needs be, even unto death.

Moreover, we have another reason. I trust many here can say that they love the Savior because of his present dealings towards them. What has he not done for us this very day? Some of you came here this morning heavy and you went away rejoicing; perhaps you have had answers to prayer this very week. You have passed through the furnace and not a smell of fire has passed upon you. You have had many sins this week, but you have felt the efficacy of his blood again and again. Some of us have known what it is during the past six days to have the ravishing delights of private communion with him. He has made us glad; our spirits have leaped for very joy, for he hath turned again the captivity of our soul. You have drunk of him as of “the brook by the way,” and you have therefore lifted up your head. Beloved, if there were nothing else which Christ had done for my soul, that which I have tasted and handled of him within the last few months would make me love him for ever, and I know that you can say the same.

Nor is this all. We love the Savior because of the excellency of his person. We are not blind to excellence anywhere, but still we can see no excellence like his.

*“Jesus thou fairest, dearest one,  
What beauties thee adorn  
Far brighter than the noonday sun,  
Or star that gilds the morn.*

*Here let me fix my wandering eyes,  
And all thy glories trace;  
Till, in the world of endless joys,  
I rise to thine embrace."*

When Tigranes and his wife were both taken prisoners by Cyrus, Cyrus turning to Tigranes said, "What will you give for the liberation of your wife?" and the King answered, "I love my wife so that I would cheerfully give up my life if she might be delivered from servitude;" whereupon Cyrus said, "That if there was such love as that between them they might both go free." So when they were away and many were talking about the beauty and generosity of Cyrus, and especially about the beauty of his person, Tigranes, turning to his wife, asked her what she thought of Cyrus, and she answered that she saw nothing anywhere but in the face of the man who had said that he would die if she might only be released from servitude. "The beauty of that man," she said, "makes me forget all others." And verily we would say the same of Jesus. We would not decry the angels, nor think ill of the saints, but the beauties of that man who gave his life for us, are so great that they have eclipsed all others, and our soul only wishes to see him and not another; for, as the stars hide their heads in the presence of the sun, so may ye all begone, ye delights, ye excellencies, when Christ Jesus, the chief delight, the chief excellency, maketh his appearance. Dr. Watts saith-

*"His worth, if all the nations knew,  
Sure the whole earth would love him too."*

And so it seems to us. Could you see him, you must love him. It was said of Henry VIII., that if all the portraits of tyrants, and murderers, and thieves were out of existence, they might all be painted from the one face of Harry VII.; and turning that round another way, we will say, that if all the excellencies, beauties, and perfections of the human race were blotted out, they might all be painted again from the face of the Lord Jesus

*"All over glorious is my Lord;  
Must be beloved, and yet adored."*

These are some of the reasons why our heart loves Jesus. Before I leave those reasons, I should like to put a few questions round amongst this great crowd. O friends, would you not love Jesus if you knew something of this love as shed abroad in your hearts-something of this love as being yours? Now, remember, there is a very great promise that Christ has made,

and it is this, "Him that cometh to me I will ill no wise cast out." Now what does that refer to? Why to any "him" in all the world, that cometh to Christ. Whoever you may be, if you come to Jesus-and you know that means just trusting him, leaning upon him-if you come to him, he will not cast you out; and when he has received you to his bosom, you will then know (but you cannot know till then) how much he loves you, and then, methinks you will say with us, "Yes, his name is 'Thou whom my soul loveth.'"

I shall now for a short time speak on the effects of this love, as we have dwelt on the cause of it. When a man has true love to Christ, it is sure to lead him to dedication. There is a natural desire to give something to the person whom we love, and true love to Jesus compels us to give ourselves to him. One of the earliest acts of the Christian's life is to take ourselves, and lay body, soul, and spirit upon the altar of consecration, saying, "Here I am; I give myself to thee." When the pupils of Socrates had nearly all of them given him a present, there was one of the best scholars who was extremely poor, and he said to Socrates, "I have none of these things which the others have presented to thee; but, O Socrates, I give thee myself;" whereupon Socrates said it was the best present he had had that day. "My son, give me thy heart"-this is what Jesus asks for. If you love him, you must give him this.

True love next shows itself in obedience. If I love Jesus, I shall do as he bids me. He is my husband, my Lord-I call him "Master." "If ye love me," saith he, "keep my commandments." This is his chosen proof of my love, and I am sure, if I love him, I shall keep his commandments. And yet there are some who profess to love Christ who very seldom think of keeping some of his commandments. "This do ye in remembrance of me," he says, and yet some of you never come to his table. May I gently ask you, how you make this disobedience consort with genuine affection for him? "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

***"'Tis love that makes our willing feet  
In swift obedience move."***

We can do anything for those we love, and, if we love Jesus, no burden will be heavy, no difficulty will be great: we should rather wish to do more than he asks of us, and only desire that he were a little more exacting that we might have a better opportunity of shewing forth our affection.



True love, again, is always considerate and afraid lest it should give offense. It walks very daintily. If I love Jesus, I shall watch my eye, my heart, my tongue, my hand, being so fearful lest I should wake my beloved, or make him stir until he please; and I shall be sure not to take in those bad guests, those ill-favored guests of pride and sloth, and love of the world. I shall tell them to be packing, for I have a dear one within who will not tarry long if he sees me giving sideling glances to these wicked ones. My heart shall be wholly his. He shall sit at the head of the table, he shall have the best dish thereon, nay, I will send all others away that I may have him all to myself, and that he may have my whole heart, all that I am, and all that I have.

Again, true love to Christ will make us very jealous of his honor. As Queen Eleanor went down upon her knees to suck the poison from her husband's wound, so we shall put our lips to the wound of Christ when he has been stabbed with the dagger of calumny, or inconsistency, being willing sooner to take the poison ourselves, and to be ourselves diseased and despised than that his name, his cross! should suffer ill. Oh, what matters it what becomes of us, if the King reigneth? I will go home to my bed, and die in peace, if the King sits on the throne. Let me see King David once again installed in Zion's sacred halls;

and my soul, in poverty and shame, shall still rejoice if the banished King Jesus shall once again come back, and have his own, and take his scepter, and wear his crown. Beloved, I trust we can say we would not mind if Christ would make a mat of us, if he would wipe his Church's filthy sandals on us, if we might but help to make her pure; we would hold the stirrup for him to mount any day, ay, and be his horsing-block that he might mount his glorious charger, and ride forth conquering and to conquer. Say, what mattereth it what we are, or where we are, if the King have his own?

If we love Christ, again, we shall be desiring to promote his cause, and we shall be desiring to promote it ourselves. We shall wish to see the strength of the mighty turned at the gate, that King Jesus may return triumphant; we shall not wish to sit still while our brethren go to war, but we shall want to take our portion in the fray, that like soldiers that love their monarch, we may prove by our wounds and by our sufferings that our love is real. The apostle says, "Let us not love in word only but in deed and in truth." Actions speak louder than words, and we shall always be anxious to tell our love in deeds as well as by our lips. The true disciple asks continually,

“Lord what wilt thou have me to do?” He esteems it his highest honor to serve the Lord. “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

*“There’s not a lamb in all the flock,  
I would disdain to feed;  
There’s not a foe before whose face  
I fear thy cause to plead.*

*Would not my ardent spirit vie  
With angels round thy throne,  
To execute thy sacred will  
And make thy glory known?”*

Yes, indeed, we thus can sing, and mean, I trust, every word; yea., will go forth into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. We will tell of this love to all, and labor to win for the Master’s honor a multitude which no man can number out of every nation, and kindred, and tribe, and tongue and people. I believe in an active love, a love which has hands to labor and feet to run, as well as a heart to feel, eyes to glance, and ears to listen. A mother’s love is of the purest and intensest sort in the world, and it is the most practical. It shows itself in deeds of untiring devotion both night and day. So also should it be with us; we should let our affections prompt us to life-long labor. The love of Christ should constrain us to live, and if needs he die to serve him. Heaven is the place of purest, holiest attachment to Christ; then we shall understand most about his love to us, and of all he has done to prove it, and the consequence will be that his servants shall serve him day and night in his holy temple. We are expecting a home in glory not of idleness, but of continual activity. It is written, “His servants shall serve him,” and we are taught to pray now that we may do his will on earth as it is done in heaven. Let us, therefore, each one, be busily engaged in the great harvest-field. The harvest is great and the laborers are few. There is room for all, and each man’s place is waiting to receive him. If we truly love our Lord, we shall at once press to the front and begin the “work of faith and labor of love.” Has not the Master been wont to show his love to us in deeds? Look to Bethlehem, to Gabbatha, to Gethsemane, to Golgotha; yea, look to his whole life as he “went about doing good,” and see if all this will not stir you up to service. Listen to the life-story of the Lord, and you will hear a voice from each one of his deeds of love saying to you, “Go thou and do likewise.”

And, once again, if we love Jesus we shall be willing to suffer for him. Pain will become light; we shall sing with Madame Guyon

*“To me ‘tis equal whether love ordain my life or death,  
Appoint me ease, or pain.”*

It is a high attainment to come to, but love can make us think ourselves of so small import that if Christ can serve himself of us, we shall make no choice as to what, or where we may be. We can sing once more-

*“Would not my heart pour forth its blood  
In honor of thy name,  
And challenge the cold hand of death  
To damp this immortal flame?”*

Our hearts are, I trust, so full of real devotion to Christ, that we can give him everything, and endure all things for his sake. Cannot we say-

*“For him I count as gain each loss,  
Disgrace for him renown,  
Well may I glory in his cross,  
While he prepares my crown.”*

Darkness is light about us if we can serve him there. The bitter is sweet if the cup is put to our lips in order that we may share in his sufferings, and prove ourselves to be his followers. When Ignatius was led to his martyrdom, as he contemplated the nearness of his death and suffering, he said, “Now I begin to be a Christian;” he felt that all that he had done and suffered before was not enough to entitle him to be called a follower of Christ, but now as the Master’s bloody baptism was before him, he realised the truth so dear to every right-minded Christian, that he was to be “like unto his Lord.” Here we can all prove our love, we can suffer his will calmly if we are not able to do it publicly.

*“Weak as I am, yet through thy love,  
I all things can perform;  
And, smiling, triumph in thy name  
Amid the raging storm.”*

I pray God we may have such a love moreover as thirsts after Jesus, which cannot be satisfied without present communion with him.

**II.** This brings me to the thought, which I shall only touch upon as the swallow skims the brook with his wing, and then up and away, lest I weary

you; the second point of consideration is the DESIRE OF THE CHURCH AFTER CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD: having called him by his title, she now expresses her longing to be with him. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon."

The desire of a renewed soul is to find out Christ and to be with him. Stale meats left over from yesterday are very well when there is nothing else, but who does not like hot food fresh from the fire? And past communion with Christ is very well. "I remember thee from the land of the Hermonites and the bill Mizar;" but these are only stale meats, and a loving soul wants fresh food every day from the table of Christ, and you that have once had the kisses of his mouth, though you remember the past kisses with delight, yet want daily flesh tokens of his love. He that drinks of this water will never thirst again, it is true, except for this water, and he will so thirst for it, that he will be like Samuel Rutherford, who began to be out of heart with the buckets and to want to get right to the well-head that he might lie down and drink, and then, if he could have his fill, he would drink the well quite dry. But there is no hope of that, or rather no fear of it: the well can never be empty, for it rises as we drink.

A true loving soul, then, wants present communion with Christ; so the question is, "Tell me where thou feedest? Where dost thou get thy comfort from, O Jesu? I will go there. Where do thy thoughts go? To thy cross? Dost thou look back to that? Then I will go there. Where thou feedest, there will I feed."

Or does this mean actively, instead of being in the passive or the neuter? Where dost thou feed thy flock? in thy house? I will go there, if I may find thee there. In private prayer? Then I will not be slack in that. In the Word? Then I will read it night and day. Tell me where thou feedest, for wherever thou standest as the shepherd, there will I be, for I want thee. I cannot be satisfied to be apart from thee. My soul hungers and thirsts to be with thee. She puts it again, "Where dost thou make thy flock to rest at noon," for there is only rest in one place, where thou causest thy flock to rest at noon. That must be a grace-given rest, and only to be found in some one chosen place. Where is the shadow of that rock? It is very hot just now here in the middle of summer, when the sun is pouring down his glorious rays like bright but sharp arrows upon us, and we, that are condemned to live in this great wilderness of brown bricks and mortar, often recollect those glades where the woods grow thick, and where the waters leap from crag to crag

down the hill side, and where the birds are singing among the birks. We delight to think of those leafy bowers where the sun cannot dart his rays, where, on some mossy bank, we may stretch ourselves to rest, or have our weary limbs in some limpid stream; and this is just what the spouse is after. She feels the heat of the world's sun, and she longs to be away from its cares and troubles that have furrowed and made brown her face till she looked as if she had been a busy keeper of the vineyards. She wants to get away to hold quiet communion with her Lord, for he is the brook where the weary may lave their wearied limbs; he is that sheltered nook, that shadow of the great rock in the weary land where his people may lie down and he at peace.

*“Jesus, the very thought of thee,  
With sweetness fills my breast;  
But sweeter far thy face to see  
And in thy presence rest.*

*For those who find thee, find a bliss,  
Nor tongue, nor pen can show  
The love of Jesus, what it is,  
None but his loved ones know.”*

Now do you not want this to-night? Do not your souls want Christ to-night? My brothers, my sisters, there is something wrong with us if we can do without Christ. If we love him, we must want him. Our hearts ever say,

*“Abide with me from morn till eve,  
For without thee I cannot live;  
Abide with me when night is nigh,  
For without thee I dare not die.”*

Yes, we cannot do without Christ; we must have him. “Give me Christ, or else I die,” is the cry of our souls. No wonder Mary Magdalene wept when she thought they had taken away her Lord, and she knew not where they had laid him. As the body suffers without food, so should we without Christ. As the fish perish out of water, so should we apart from Christ. I must quote another verse of a hymn, for really the sweet songsters of Israel have lavished all their best poesy, and very rightly so, to tell for us our love-tale concerning our Beloved. I am sure that our heart's inner voice can set to sweetest music the words:-

*“Oh that I could for ever sit  
With Mary at the Master’s feet:  
Be this my happy choice  
My only care, delight, and bliss,  
My joy, my heaven on earth he this,  
To hear the Bridegroom’s voice.”*

Yes! to be with Jesus is heaven; anywhere on earth, or in the skies, all else is wilderness and desert. It is paradise to be with him; and heaven without Christ would be no heaven to me. My heart cannot rest away from him. To have no Christ would be a punishment greater than I could bear; I should wander, like another Cain, over the earth a fugitive and a vagabond. Verily there would be no peace for my soul. I am sure that the true wife, if her husband is called to go upon a journey, longeth ardently for his return. If he is gone to the wars, she dreads lest he should fall. How each letter comes perfumed to her when it tells of his love and constancy, and how she watches for the day when she shall clasp him in her arms once more. Oh, ye know that when ye were children, if ye were sent to school, how ye counted till the holidays came on. I had a little almanack, and marked out every day the night before, and so counted one day less till the time I should get home again, and so may you.

*“May not a captive long his own dear land to see?  
May not the pris’ner seek release from bondage to be free?”*

Of course he may, and so may you, beloved, pant and sigh, as the hart panteth for the waterbrooks-for the comfortable enjoyment of the Lord Jesus Christ’s presence.

### **III.** THE ARGUMENT USED BY THE CHURCH.

Here is the desire. Now, to close, she backs that up with an argument. She says, “Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?” Thou hast plenty of companions-why should I be turned aside? Why should I not be one? Let us talk it over. Why should I lose my Lord’s presence? But the devil tells me I am a great sinner. Ah! but it is all washed away, and gone for ever. That cannot separate me, for it does not exist. My sin is buried.

*“Plung’d as in a shoreless sea-  
Lost as in immensity.”*

The devil tells me I am unworthy, and that is a reason. But I always was unworthy, and yet it was no reason why he should not love me at first, amid therefore cannot be a reason why I should not have fellowship with him now. Why should I be left out? Now I am going to speak for the poorest here-I do not know where he is. I want to speak for you that have got the least faith; you that think yourselves the smallest in all Israel; you Mephibosheths that are lame in your feet, and yet sit at the king's table; you poor despised Mordecais that sit at the king's gate, yet cannot get inside the palace, I have this to say to you-Why should you be left there? Just try and reason. Why should I, Jesus, be left out in the cold, when the night comes on. No, there is a cot for the little one, as well as a bed for his bigger brother. Why should I be turned aside? I am equally bought with a price. I cost him, in order to save me, as much as the noblest of the saints: he bought them with blood; he could not buy me with less. I must have been loved as much, or else, seeing that I am of so little worth, I should not have been redeemed at all. If there be any difference, perhaps I am loved somewhat better. Is there not greater, better love shown in the choice of me than of some who are more worthy than I am? Why, then, should I be left out? I know if I have a child that is deformed and decrepid, I love it all the more: it seems as if I had a tenderer care for it. Then why should my heavenly Father be less kind to me than I should be to my offspring? Why should I be turned aside? He chose me: he cannot change in his choice. Why, then, should he cast me off. He knew what I was when he chose me; he cannot therefore find out any fresh reason for turning me aside. He foresaw I should misbehave myself, and yet he selected me. Well, then, there cannot be a reason why I should be left to fall away. Again, I ask, Why should I be turned aside? I am a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, and though I am less than the least of all his saints, yet he has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Why should I be turned aside? I have a promise all to myself. Has he not said, "I will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed"? Has he not said, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him in them that hope in his mercy"? If I cannot do more, I can do that. I do hope in his mercy; then why should I be turned aside? If any should think of doing so, it should not be I, for I want to be near him; I am such a poor plant that I ought to be kept in the sun: I shall never do in the shade. My big brother, perhaps, may manage for a little time without comfort, but I cannot, for I am one of the Ready-to-Halts. I recollect how the shepherds of Mount Clear said, "Come in, Mr. Little Faith; Come in, Mr. Feeble Mind; Come in, Mr. Ready-to-Halt;

Come in, Mary;" but they did not say, "Come in, Father Faithful; Come in, Matthew; Come in, Valiant-for-Truth." No, they said these might do as they liked; they were quite sure to take their own part; but they looked first to the feeblest. Then why should I be turned aside? I am the feeblest, and want his person most. I may use my very feebleness and proneness to fall as the reason why I should come to him. Why should I be turned aside? I may fall into sin. My heart may grow cold without his glorious presence; and then, what if I should perish! Why, here let me bethink myself. If I am the meanest lamb in his flock I cannot perish without doing the God of heaven a damage. Let me say it again with reverence. If I, the least of his children, perish, I shall do his Son dishonor, for what will the arch-fiend say? "Aha," saith he, "thou Surety of the Covenant, thou couldst keep the strong, but thou couldst not keep the weak: I have this lamb here in the pit whom thou couldst not preserve. Here is one of thy crown-jewels," saith he, "and though it be none of the brightest, though it be not the most sparkling ruby in thy coronet, yet it is one of thy jewels, and I have it here. Thou hast no perfect regalia: I have a part of it here." Shall that ever be, after Christ has said, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand"? Shall things be, when the strong arm of God is engaged for my succor, and he has said to me, "The Eternal God is thy refuge; and underneath are the everlasting arms?" Jesus, turn me not aside, lest by my fall I grieve thy Spirit, and lest by my fall I bring disgrace upon thy name.

Why should I turn aside? There is no reason why I should. Come my soul, there are a thousand reasons why thou shouldst not. Jesus beckons thee to come. Ye wounded saints, ye that have slipped to your falling, you that are grieved, sorrowing, and distressed, come to his cross, come to his throne again. Blacksliders, if ye have been such, return! return! return! A husband's heart has no door to keep out his spouse, and Jesus' heart has no power to keep out his people. Return! return! There is no divorce sued out against you, for the Lord, the God of Jacob saith," He hateth putting away." Return! return! Let us get to our chambers, let us seek renewed fellowship; and, oh, you that have never had it, and have never seen Christ, may you thirst after him to-night, and if you do, remember the text I gave you, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Whosoever thou mayest be, if thou wilt come to Jesus, he will not cast thee out.

*"Come, and welcome sinner, come."*

God bring thee for Jesus' sake. Amen.



# THE DOVE'S RETURN TO THE ARK.

NO. 637

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 2ND, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.” — Genesis 8:9.

THE sending forth of the raven and of the dove, have furnished ready materials for numerous allegories with which divines in different ages have sometimes edified, and more frequently amused their hearers. We cannot afford time to mention many of them, but one of the host may serve as a specimen. Certain expositors have fancied that the mission of the raven prefigured the sending forth of the law, which was black and terrible, and which came not back to man bearing any token of comfort, or sign of hope; and that afterwards the Lord sent forth the gospel, foreshadowed by the dove, which by-and-by came back to sinful man, bearing the olive-branch of peace; thus they illustrated the great truth, that there is no peace on the terms of the law, for that raven can only croak hoarsely and fiercely, but there is peace on the ground of the gospel, for the dove bears the olive-branch in her mouth. Such farfetched allegories as these, at the time when they were contrived and carried out may have had their value, and have been instructive to an undiscerning age; it is not, however, to be regretted that the Church of to-day has far less taste for such childish things. We are quite as willing as any men to see allegories where they are really clear, for we remember the words of Paul concerning Hagar and Sarah, “which things are an allegory,” but we are not ready to follow the quaint and queer

inventions of spiritualists whether ancient or modern. The clue must be evident, or we had rather not enter the labyrinth.

There is one adaptation of the incident before us which seems so naturally to suggest itself, that I could not help using it this morning. The dove may well picture the believer's soul. That soul sometimes flies abroad to and fro, and takes a survey of all things, but it finds no rest for the sole of its foot anywhere except in Christ Jesus; and, therefore, however long its flight, it is sure eventually to return to its own proper resting-place. The child of God can never be content out of his God: he who has once had Christ in him, the hope of glory, can never be satisfied to rest or glory except in the Lord Jesus.

Let us this morning carry out that one thought, and look at it in the various lights which this picture of the dove may throw upon it.

**I.** First, LET US LOOK AT THE DOVE SETTING OUT UPON HER VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY. She has been perfectly safe in the ark. Other fowls have perished; cattle and creeping things have all been destroyed by the flood, but this dove, with other favored ones, has been happily secured. She has wanted for nothing; for the God who put her into the ark has taken care of her there, and that righteous man who was made the means of her rescue has constantly provided her with her daily food. She has nestled in the ark and been happy and comfortable there, and yet she is about to stretch her wings and fly away from the bark of safety. Why does she act thus? Well may we ask this question of ourselves: we have been saved in Christ Jesus, many of us, saved when the floods of sin covered the rest of our kinsfolk, saved when our doubts and fears threatened eternal ruin to us. We have been provided for in Christ Jesus, and housed in his salvation. He has been no wilderness to us; we have found enduring rest and seasonable provision in him. How is it then that we can stretch our wings to fly, or even open our eyes to look abroad? My soul, is there not enough in Christ? Why wilt thou seek elsewhere? Why leave the fountain for the broken cisterns? Will a man leave the fertile fields for a barren rock, or forsake the running waters for pestilential pools? Remember the mischief that Dinah gained unto herself when she left her father's house to go to the tents of Shechem. Bethink thee how the prodigal fared when he left his Father's house. Why dost thou not tarry at home with thy husband and liege lord? Why dost thou go abroad where all is empty and void and waste? Yet we must all confess that these hearts of ours are apt to bear us away from Christ, and

these minds of ours are prone to forget him and to look abroad after some other love. But why did the dove fly away? I answer first-a very simple answer to give, you will say-because she had wings. A creature with wings feels within itself a natural instinct to fly, and, having been in the ark so long where she had little space for flight, I daresay her liberty at first was very sweet to her. What are these pinions for-wherefore are they covered with silver and the feathers thereof with yellow gold, if I may not clip through yonder cloud and cleave these earth-mists and see what there is to be seen? And, therefore, because she has wings she flies; and so it is with us. Our soul has many thoughts and many powers which make the spirit restless. If we were without imagination, we might be content with the few plain truths which we have so well known and proved, but having an imagination, we are often dazzled by it, and we pant to know whether certain things which look like solid verities really are so. If we had no reason, but could abide entirely in a state of pure and simple faith, we might not be exposed to much of the restlessness which now afflicts us, but reason will draw conclusions, ask questions, suggest problems, raise enquiries, and vex us with difficulties. Therefore because our souls are moved by so vast a variety of thoughts, and possess so many powers which are all restless and active, it is readily to be understood, that while we are here in our imperfect state, our spirits should be tempted to excursions of research and voyages of discovery, as though we sought after some other object of love besides the one who still is dearer to us than all the world besides.

Possibly there was another reason. This dove was once lodged in a dovecote. When children, we saw men throwing up carrier pigeons into the air, laden with missives, and we foolishly wondered how the dove knew the way to go with the letter, dreaming as we did, that it flew with it wherever the person chose to direct the envelope. We soon learned the secret. The dove bears the letter to her own dovecote; she will go nowhere else with it, and it is not in the wit of man to make the dove fly in any other direction than towards its own home. The dove is thrown up into the air; she mounts aloft, whirls round and round and round, looking with eager eyes, and at last she sees the place where she has been wont to rest, and where her little ones have been reared, and she darts straight to the spot. Before the ark was built, no doubt, this bird frequented much a chosen spot where it had built its nest and reared its young ones and its heart went towards it. Though it had been in the ark so long, it had not forgotten the past; and

therefore no sooner has it liberty than it seeks to fly in the direction of its own dovecote, although that cote had been swept away for ever. Ah! and you and I, before we knew the Savior, we had a rest; before we had experienced the sweetness of his love we found joy in sin. We built our nest, and we thought in our heart that we should never be moved. We were satisfied once after a fashion with the vanities of this present world; we had our loves, our joys, our pleasures, our delights; and that carnal old nature within us is not dead, and when it gets its liberty, it is sure to look out for its old haunts. Have you not even when singing God's praise, remembered a snatch of an old, perhaps lascivious song. Have not you frequently, when in the service of God, had brought to your recollection a dark scene of sin in which you had a share, and though you have loathed it with the new nature, yet has the old nature tended towards it, and that base heart within which will not die until flesh becomes worms' meat, has whispered to you to go back to the fleshpots of Egypt, and once more to partake of the garlic, and leeks, and onions, which were so sweet in the house of bondage. Yes, the dovecote still has its attraction. The best of men have still within them the seeds of those sins which make the worst of men so vile. The old serpent still creeps along the heart, which has become a garden of the Lord. Our gold is mixed with dross. Our sky bears many a cloud, and the clearest river of humanity still has mire at the bottom. I marvel not that the dove flew away from the ark when she recollected her dovecote, and I do not wonder that at seasons, the old remembrances get the upper hand with our spirit, and we forget the Lord we love, and have a hankering after sin.

Yet it would not be fair to forget that this dove was sent out by Noah; so that whatever may have been the particular motives which ruled the creature, there was a higher motive which ruled Noah who sent her out. Even so there are times when the Lord permits his people to endure temptation. What means this passage concerning the Savior, "After he was baptized, he was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil?" What! Led of the Spirit? Where will the Spirit lead him to? Will not the Spirit lead him to his Father's temple that he may join in its hallowed exercises? Will it not lead him to the mountain where he may proclaim glad tidings to the people? No. The Spirit led him into the wilderness "to be tempted of the devil." We are taught to pray, "Lead us not into temptation;" and very stupid people have tried to alter the petition into "Leave us not in temptation." The Savior never said that. It would be a

very proper prayer, but it is not what he said. His words are, "Lead us not into temptation." It appears, then, that sometimes God may allow his people to be led into temptation, or otherwise we need not say, "Lead us not into temptation." Such temptation produces excellent results, being overruled by divine grace for the lasting benefit of the Lord's people. The dove would love the ark far better than before, after taking its dreary flight above the watery waste. She would nestle more peacefully than ever in Noah's hands after having seen and known how impossible it was to find rest for the sole of her foot anywhere else. Thus the Lord permits his people to gad abroad in their thoughts, and to go flying about in their minds that their after repose may be sweeter and more enduring. He takes away from them the light of his countenance and familiar fellowship with himself that the darkness may make them prize the sun. They fly from vanity to vanity learning the emptiness of all, and then they cling to their own real bliss, their God and Father in Christ Jesus; and throughout life they have to bless God for that dark and bitter experience which yielded so good and comfortable a fruit that it compelled them to know that there was none upon earth for them but Christ, and none even in heaven to fill their souls but their Lord Jesus. So when I see the Christian taking wing in his thought away from the ark, I will be grieved to see him in the temptation, but I will pray the Lord to overrule it that he may come back again and say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Beloved, it is a bitter but a precious lesson to learn, that all is nought out of Christ, and that Jesus alone can give us rest. May you all learn it thoroughly and learn it soon.

## **II. NOW MARK THE DOVE AS SHE FINDS NO REST.**

She has plumed her wings, she has given a loose to them and she hurries in her search after a home. The mountain tops, I think, according to the preceding verses were just visible, but this was all. She flies over them, and between them, as they rise like islands in the midst of that vast shoreless sea. At last she flags; even the dove cannot fly for ever. She needs to rest. Where shall she stay her flight? The raven yonder is comfortable enough, gorging himself upon the carcass of a huge beast which was floating by. The dove, however, cannot rest there; her nature loathes putridity, and she flies away from the reeking mass. Yonder is a tree; one of the mighty monarchs of the forest has been broken off in the great tempest which drowned the world and is now floating high with branches lifted up like the masts of a vessel. She tries to light upon it but it is covered with thick mire

and filth. The wet and slime suit her not, and she takes to her wings again. Further off another object attracts her, and she speeds to it as well as her weary wings can carry her, but there is nothing there for her to rest upon; she turns to east, to north, to south, but her wings grow weary for she can find no place whereon to stay the sole of her foot. As we observe her flapping her wings so languidly, I think we have a picture of a Christian when in pursuit of an earthly object on which he would fain set his heart. Forgetting that here we have no continuing city, the pilgrims of God at times wander in the wilderness, hoping to find a settled habitation there; but their desolate hearts are soon faint within them, for there is no rest for their foot on earth.

The Savior very beautifully said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What kind of rest did the Savior mean to give? I take it that he meant rest to all the powers of manhood. The intellect seeks after rest, and by nature seeks it apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Men of fine education, men of great mental powers, are apt even when converted to look upon the simplicities of the cross of Christ—I may not say with disesteem — but still with an eye too little reverent and loving. They are snared in the oh net in which the Grecians were taken, and have a hankering to mix philosophy with revelation. The temptation is with a man of refined thought and high education to go away from the simple truth of Christ crucified, and to invent a more complicated, as the term is, a more intellectual doctrine. This it was which led the early Christian Church into Gnosticism, and bewitched them with all sorts of heresies. This is the root of Neology, and the other fine things which in days gone by were so fashionable in Germany, and are now so ensnaring to certain classes of divines. Brethren, I care not who you are, nor what your education may be, if you be the Lord's people, you will find no rest in the teachings of philosophy, or philosophising divinity. You may receive this dogma of one great thinker, or that of another profound reasoner, but what the chaff is to the wheat, that will these be to the sure Word of God. All that reason when best guided can find out, is but the A. B. C. of truth, and even that lacks sureness and certainty; while in Christ Jesus there is treasured up all the fullness of wisdom and knowledge. All attempts on the part of Christians to be content with systems such as Unitarian and Broad Church thinkers would approve of, must fail; true heirs of heaven must come back to the grandly simple reality which makes the ploughboy's eye flash with joy, and glad the pious

man's heart—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Christ satisfies the most elevated intellect when he is believably received, but apart from him the mind of the regenerate discovers no rest.

The heart, too, wants satisfying. Every one of us needs an object to love. I suppose there can hardly live on earth a man so monstrously selfish, that he can be perfectly wrapped up in himself, and cure for no one. Some of the grossest villains who have ever defiled the name of manhood, have had one point in which they could be touched; their hearts have gone out after one dear object, it may be a little child, long dead, and yet the recollection of that little one sleeping beneath the turf has been a link to goodness. Many a hardened man has recollected his mother, and her name has touched his heart. We must love something, or some one. Man was not made to live alone, and therefore no man liveth unto himself. Our heart must flow like a river, or it corrupts like a stagnant pool. Some have great hearts, and they require a great object on which to spend their love. They love fondly and firmly, too fondly and too firmly for earthly love. These are they who suffer from broken hearts. They have so much love that when they set it upon an unworthy object they reap a proportionate degree of misery and disappointment. Now let me say solemnly that no heart of a child of God will ever be satisfied with any object or person short of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is room for wife and children, there is room for friend and acquaintance, and all the more room in one's heart because Christ is there, but neither wife, nor children nor friends, nor kinsfolk can ever fill the believer's heart. He must have Christ Jesus, there is no rest for him elsewhere. Do I address any believer who has been making an idol? Have you set up any God in your heart? have you loved any creature so as to forget your Savior? Be it child, or husband, or friend, take heed of the sin of idolatry. Ah! you cannot, you shall not find rest for the sole of your foot in the creature, however fair that creature may seem. God will break your idol before your eyes, or if he suffer that idol to stand, it shall remain to plague and curse you, for thus saith the Lord, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm." "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Give your hearts to the Lord Jesus and he will never disappoint you. Lean on him with all your weight of affection, for he will never fail you. Come hither all ye fond and doting, ye lovers, and love with all the lavish wealth and fervent heat of your spirits; kindle your hearts until like Nebuchednezzar's furnace they glow seven times hotter; here is a fuel with which you can maintain the

flame for ever. You whose love is like the sea, too deep to fathom, come you to the Savior and give him all and he shall not waste a drop, for he deserves all you can give, and he will give you back a love which, compared with yours, shall be as the ocean when compared with the dewdrop that twinkles on the bough. So there is rest for the heart in Christ Jesus, but nowhere else.

Man has also judgment, and judgment when exercised upon things right or wrong, is called conscience, and the conscience is a very difficult thing to quiet when once disturbed. Conscience is like a magnetic needle, which if once turned aside from its pole, will never cease trembling; you can never make it still until it is permitted to return to its proper place. "In vain the trembling conscience seeks, Some solid ground to rest upon; With strong desire the spirit faints, Till we apply to Christ alone." We shall never be able to find lasting peace for conscience till we cast ourselves upon Christ Jesus. The child of God may sometimes so forget himself as to endeavor to base his hopes upon his experiences, his feelings, his joys, or his repentances. He may try to assure himself that all is well between God and his own soul, because of his graces or his good works. Now, Christian, thou knowest, or thou oughtest to know by past experience, that thou wilt never enjoy lasting peace here. Thou must come to Christ as thou didst at first with nothing of thine own, and take him to be thine all in all, and if thou dost not do this thy foot shall know no rest for thou shalt fly wearily on till thou shalt drop with despair. Christ Jesus in the preciousness of his besprinkled blood; Christ Jesus in the glory of his snow-white righteousness; Christ Jesus in the prevalence of his intercession; Christ Jesus in the power of his arm and the love of his heart, must be the sole and solitary dependence of every heir of heaven, and if you try to mix anything else with Christ, then your conscience shall accuse and Satan shall find an echo in your heart when he rails at you, and what will you do then? Let me say, dear friends, that for the entire man—we cannot stop this morning to take all the different powers with which man is endowed but taking the whole together, there is nothing that can satisfy the entire man but the Lord's love and the Lord's own self. Many saints have tried to anchor in other roadsteads, but all have failed. I believe Solomon was a saint, I know he was a sinner; I believe he was the biggest fool that ever lived, but I believe that he was also the wisest of men; he was in fact a mass of contradictions. Now Solomon was permitted to make experiments for us all, and to do for us what we must not dare to do for ourselves. Here



is his testimony in his own words: — “I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants horn in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I got me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” “Vanity of vanity, all is vanity.” What! the whole of it vanity? Is there nothing in all that wealth, Solomon? What! nothing in that wide dominion of thine, reaching from the river even to the sea? Nothing in Palmyra’s glorious seat? Nothing in the house of the forest of Lebanon? Dost thou see nothing from Dan to Beersheba, when thou hast made brass to be like pebble-stones, and gold and silver to be but as common dust of the land? In those sweet sounds that lull thee to thy rest, in all the music and dancing that delight thee, is there nothing? “Nothing,” he says, “but weariness of spirit.” This is his verdict when he has tried it all. To get hold of Christ, to have his love, and to taste of union with him—this, dear brethren, this is everything. You need not try any other form of life in order to see whether it is better than the Christian’s. Let me assure you, if you roam the world round, and search from Britain to Japan, you will see no sights like a sight of the Savior’s face; and if you could have all the comforts of life, yet if you lost your Savior, you would be wretched; but if you get him, then should you rot in a dungeon, you would find it a paradise; should you live in obscurity, or die with famine, you would yet be satisfied with favor, and full of the goodness of the Lord.

### III. Let us spend a moment in considering WHY THE DOVE COULD FIND NO REST FOR THE SOLE OF HER FOOT.

Was there a want of wilt in the dove? Was she one of those discontented birds that will not rest anywhere? Nothing of the kind; she seems to have searched after rest, for otherwise it need not be recorded that she found none. There are certain people in this world who never will rest, and they certainly do not deserve it. They always grumble. No matter what you do, or what you do not do, they grumble evermore. They grumble at the sun, and call him, as Thompson once did, "a rosy drunkard;" they murmur at the moon, her light is too pale, and sickly, and variable; they murmur at death — it is a dreadful thing to lose one's friends; they murmur at life — everybody seems to die and he happy, they say, except themselves, they are condemned to live on. You never can please them; all things are either too hot or too cold, too young or too old, too rough or too smooth, too high or too low; they have made up their minds that there is nothing on earth that will ever satisfy them; they have set up an ultra standard of what they want, and the world does not yield it. No grass is green enough for them, no milk that is ever given by cows is fit for them to drink; no wine that was ever pressed from grapes is rich enough for their taste. Upon all created things they use the only organ which seems to be of use to them, that is, their nose, and that they turn up! Such people as these will tell you that there is nothing on earth—nothing on earth. They have dyspepsia, their liver is out of order, and consequently there is nothing on the earth; everything here below is mean and despicable. Now when people talk like that, you just measure their talk by the men, and make small account of their utterances. These men are not talking from their judgment, they are merely talking under the influence of an absurd, half-mad feeling; but such is not the case with the Christian. I know a considerable number of Christians who are of a cheerful disposition, and who would even as worldlings have been satisfied with very little; a kind of men (I trust you have some of them for your friends), who are not often put out; they, on the other hand, always look at the bright side of everything and if there should be a something which is a little amiss, they take it as a variety, and only say, "Well, this is a change," and so they make pleasure where others would find pain; and yet these very people when they are converted will tell you that they are not satisfied out of Christ Now their verdict is worth considering. The dove had a will to find rest for the sole of her foot, but she could not.

It is not from want of will that I am compelled to say I cannot find anything beneath these stars, nor within the compass of the skies, that can satisfy my soul's desires; I must get my God and have him to fill my large expectations, or I shall not be content. I mention these things because people are apt to suppose that Christians are all a set of melancholy dyspeptics, who put up with religion because there is nothing else that helps to make them to be so happily miserable, and therefore they take to it as congenial with their melancholy disposition; but it is not so; we are a cheerful, genial race, and yet for all that we are not resting the sole of our foot anywhere in earthly things.

Again, the reason why the dove could find no rest, was not because she had no eye to see. I know not how far a dove's eye can discern, but it must be a very vast distance, perfectly incredible I should think. We see the dove sometimes mount aloft: we can see nothing, and yet she perceives her dovecote, and darts towards it. Now the Christian does not say there is no joy on earth for him, except in his Lord, because he has no power to see things pleasing and delightful. If there be melody in music, the Christian knows it, likes it, rejoices in it. If there be sweetness, his palate is as good as another man's. If there be anything to be found in wealth, or what the world calls pleasure, he can see it all: he is not blind. I know many Christians who are as quick in apprehension, as refined in taste, and as ready to appreciate anything that is pleasurable as other men, and yet these men who are not fanatics, who are not shut up to a narrow range of things, but whose vision can take in the whole circle of sublunary delights, these men who have not only seen but even tasted, yet bear their witness that like the dove they can find no rest for the sole of their foot.

Moreover, the reason why the dove found no rest, was not because she had no wings to reach it. Her wings were strong and swift, she could fly as well as the raven, perhaps she could in the long run outstrip him. So the Christian has power to enter into the enjoyments of the world if he liked. It is not because his youth has departed and he has become old and shrivelled, and therefore the delights of the flesh have ceased to be temptations to him. No. Of course there are some in that condition, who when converted, can almost be taunted by sinners with the remark that they have tried the world's pleasures, and when they could not enjoy them they then turned away from them; but some of us are young and strong and full of blood, and our bones are full of marrow, and if we willed it we could be ringleaders in all sorts of pleasure, and plunge head first into the stream of

sensual delight. We lack not courage, and we lack not force, and yet for all this—we say it solemnly, and the God that searches all hearts knows we only say what we feel forced to say — that we can find no rest for the sole of our foot in earthly pleasures. We have tried, we have wished to rest, we have even wanted to be satisfied with the world, but the void within can never be filled out of the mines of earth. We cannot: God has made it all empty to us.

Now what was the reason then? It was not want of will, it was not want of eye, nor was it want of wing—what was it? The reason lay in this, that she was a dove. If she had been a raven, she would have found plenty of rest for the sole of her foot. It was her nature that made her unresting, and the reason why the Christian cannot find satisfaction in worldly things is because there is a new nature within him that cannot rest. “Up! up! up!” cries the new heart, “what hast thou to do here?” “Come, strike thy tents,” cries the new creature. “thou hast no continuing city here: how is it that thou triest to make one in this barren wilderness? Away with thee! what art thou at?” If I could transform myself to an unregenerate man the world might content me, but if I can regenerate, it matters not into what society I may be thrown away, I never can, I never shall, I must not, I dare not hope for contentment, for to the regenerate Christ alone is satisfaction—they cannot find it anywhere else.

You see then that this is a great test: this will try you, dear friends, and divide you. If any of you ate saying, “Oh, I am satisfied enough, I do not want this Christ the man talks about: give me this, and give me that, and I shall be quite content.” I say, “Very likely; so was the raven content with carrion. But, and if thou be a child of God, thou mayest seek contentment elsewhere, but thou shalt be compelled. perhaps by sore and bitter trials, to turn away from all earthly things, and fly back again to thine ark.”

**IV.** Being disappointed, WHAT DID THE DOVE THEN DO? When she found there was no contentment elsewhere, what then? She flew back to the ark. Josephus tells us that the dove came back to Noah with her wings and feet all wet and muddy. I think it is very likely, but I do not think it any the more likely because Josephus says so. Some of you have grown wet and muddy. You have been trying to find rest in the world, Christian, and you have got mired with it. Trying to rest those feet where they could not rest, you have collected filth. What then? Shall I advise you to bathe in the flood? Shall I advise you to cleanse those wings till they are bright as they

once were? No, I do not; I cannot give you any such advice; I can only say to you, “Do what the dove (lid.” She mounted again, she caught sight of the ark, and knew the place of safety. I want you once again to get a sight of Christ. Peter had gone far away, as the dove had done; he had denied his Master with oaths and curses, but what brought him back? Why, it was the Lord getting a sight of Peter, and Peter getting a sight of the Lord. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and he went out and wept bitterly.” Was it not all done as soon as the Lord’s eye and Peter’s eye came into contact? If you are enabled, by the Holy Spirit, to remember that there was a Savior who loved you so that heaven could not hold him, and line must needs come to earth, and enter into your degradation, mind hear your sin, and suffer for your sake, you will be getting right at once, however far off you are, if you look to Jesus, there is life for you in a look at the Crucified One.

Then the dove, after looking, was not content with that; she began to speed with all her might back to the ark. So, when you have a faint view of your Savior and you are once more consciously saved, then fly back to him. I do not read that the dove made a tour round about, or that she thought she would try something else, but no, she took just the straightest line she could, the nearest way between herself and her loved abode, and went right straight away to Noah. Fear may have made her wings heavy, but it did not stop them, and mire and mud may have made the journey more laborious, but it did not turn her aside. Come thou mired one, come thou fainting one, dove as thou art, though thou thinkest thyself to be black as the raven with the mire of sin, back, back to the Savior. Every moment thou waitest doth but increase thy misery; thine attempts to plume thyself and make thyself fit for him are all vanity. Come thou to him just as thou art. “Return thou backsliding Israel.” He does not say, “Return thou repenting Israel” (there is such an invitation doubtless), but “thou backsliding one, as a backslider with all thy backslidings about thee. Retain, return, return!”

**V.** I want you now to turn your eye for a moment to THE VERY BEAUTIFUL SCENE, so it seems to me to be, at the end of her return journey.

Noah has been looking out for his dove all day long. Here she comes! How heavily she flies, she will drop; she will never reach the ark. Here she comes and Noah is ready to receive her. She looks bespotted and bespeaked with mire and dirt, but Noah waits for her. She has just strength

to get on to the edge of the ark, she can hardly hold on there and is ready to drop, when Noah puts forth his hand and pulls her in unto him. Mark that: "pulled her in unto him." It seems to me to imply that she did not fly right in herself, but was too fearful, or too weary to get right in. She got as far as she could, and then he put forth his hand and pulled her in unto him. Did you ever feel that blessed gracious pull, when your heart has been desiring to get near to Christ. Oh, it has been such tugging, such toiling in prayer; you could only say, "I would but cannot pray, my heart is heavy as lead, and my soul as hard as adamant and dead as iron, I cannot stir myself and get near to the Savior. Oh that I could! Oh that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest." All of a sudden it comes, that gracious pull; your heart begins to be on fire; or ever you are aware, your soul seems to be like the chariots of Aminadib. Now it is all well with you, now can you sing sweetly to your beloved, who has done great things for you whereof you are glad. All this was you perceive to the wandering dove, to the miry dove speckled with filth; just as she was is she is pulled into the ark. So you, with all that sin of yours, and those wanderings will be received. "Only return"-those are two gracious words in the Bible-"only return"-so it is put. What! nothing else? No, only return. She had no olive branch in her mouth this time nothing at all but just herself and her wanderings; but it is "only return," and she does return, and Noah pulls her in. Lord! pull me in. My thirsty spirit faints to reach thee; my soul crieth out for thy presence but cannot reach it; I see thee, Lord; pull me in. When like Esther I faint in thy presence, and cannot tell thee what I would, stretch out thy silver scepter, read my heart and grant my desire, and show thyself to me, and open mine eyes to see thee and know thee.

Thus much concerning the dove and its likeness to our own hearts; now I close with these three things:- First, this becomes first of all a test to you. We can divide the house into two parts by asking the question, "Are you satisfied out of Christ?" Are you satisfied and content with anything short of a conscious knowledge of your union and interest in Christ Jesus? If so, you have no reason to believe that you are a converted man. If this world satisfies you, I have no fault to find, no reason to be angry with you. Who finds fault with horses for being satisfied with hay and oats? It is their natural food. Some persons are very indignant with others, because they will go to theatres and gay assemblies. They only take what their nature craves after. The raven is now feeding on his carrion. I draw a distinction evermore between that which men without grace may do, and that which

gracious men may do. The graceless man stands somewhat on the level of the beast that perisheth. Well, let the swine have their husks; let the swine, I say, have their provender. You will never make them any better by denying them their husks; you may excite their angry passions against you, that is all; let them have their husks. But you, on the other hand, who are a Christian, are a different being; you are lifted into another state, you have another nature. Now, could you enjoy those things? If you really could find a satisfaction in them, you are a hypocrite. If your soul really could stretch herself at rest, and find the bed long enough, and the coverlet broad enough to cover you in the chambers of sin, then you are a hypocrite, and one of these days down to the pit your soul must go; but if, on the other hand, you feel sure and certain that if you could indulge in sin without a punishment, yet it would be a punishment of itself; and that if you could have the whole world, and never be parted from it, it would be quite enough misery not to be parted from it; for your God—your God—is what your soul craves after; then be of good courage; thou art a child of God. With all thy sins and imperfections, take this to thy comfort: if thy soul has no rest in sin, thou art not as the sinner is; if thou art still crying after and craving after something better, Christ has not forgotten thee, for thou hast not quite forgotten him. Here is a test, then.

And then, secondly, we must use our text as an encouragement. Here we have an encouragement to backsliders to return like the dove, because she did not find time ark shut against her; we do not even find there was any delay. Noah pulled her in at once. To the sinner here is encouragement too. If thou comest back to the ark, thou shalt not be excluded. If any man shall be shut out of heaven, he himself shuts the door. He who is damned signs his own death-warrant. Our verse is true —

*“None are excluded hence.  
But those who do themselves exclude.”*

If thou comest sinner, drunkard, swearer, liar, thief, whoever thou mayest be, it is written, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

But here is one,” methinks I hear him say, “here is one of such a sort as never came before; blacker than night more full of sin than the egg is full of meat; now, now there is one that will be shut out.” I say make way for him, make way for him, stand back ye common sinners, make a way for him, now will we see whether Christ is true or no. Brethren, what will be the issue?—why, we know that in Christ there is love and truth and faithfulness,

and that what he says he means, and that his promise he will perform. When that black sinner cometh, the Lord looks upon him with an eye of unutterable love, and his first word is, "I have blotted out thine iniquity as a cloud, and like a thick cloud thy transgression;" "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," and his next act is to plunge that sinner in the fountain filled with blood, and on a sudden he cometh out whiter than snow, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, for he is able to cleanse from all iniquity, and to deliver from all unrighteousness, and to make the foulest and vilest bright as the sun at noonday. This is encouragement: God help you to take it! May the Holy Spirit bring you to Christ to-day.

And then, lastly, we use our text, I think, as a loud cry for gratitude. Does Christ receive us when we have found him, and is there none on earth like him? Is he the best of all the good, the fairest of all the lovely? Oh then let us praise him. Down with your idols, up with the Lord Jesus. Now let time standard of all pomp and pride he trampled under foot, but let the cross of Jesus, which the world frowns and scoffs at, be lifted up. Oh for a high throne for the Savior! let him be lifted up for ever, and let my soul sit at his feet, and kiss his feet, and wash them with my tears. Oh how precious is Christ! How can it be that I have thought so little of him. How is it I can go abroad for anything else when he is so full, so rich, so satisfying. Christian, make a covenant with thine heart, and ask the Lord to ratify it, that thou wilt never from him depart. Bid him set thee as a signet upon his finger and as a bracelet upon his arm. Ask him to bind thee about him as the bride decketh herself with ornaments, and as the bridegroom putteth on his jewels. I would live in Christ's heart; in the clefts of that rock my soul would abide. The sparrow hath made a house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God, and so too would I make my nest my home in thee, and never from thee may the soul of thy turtle dove go forth again, but may I nestle close to Jesus, who has pulled me back into the ark after my backsliding. May the Holy Spirit so preserve us for his name's sake. Amen.



# WHO ARE ELECTED?

NO. 638

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 9TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he.” — 1 Samuel 16:12.*

SAMUEL was sent to Bethlehem to discover the object of God’s election. This would have been a very difficult task if the God who sent him had not accompanied him, and spoken with the sure voice of inspiration within him so soon as the chosen object stood before him. Brethren, it is neither your task nor mine to guess who are God’s elect, apart from marks and evidences. What was done in the councils of eternity before the world was made is hidden in the mind of God, and we must not curiously intrude where the door is closed by the hand of wisdom. Yet in the preaching of the Word there is a discovery made of God’s secret election. We preach the gospel to every creature under heaven; we deliver God’s threatenings and promises to every sinner, and we cry, “Look unto Jesus and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” That gospel is of itself, through God the Holy Spirit, the discernor of the chosen ones of God, when they feel its quickening power and are raised from among the spiritually dead. The gospel is a fan which, while it drives away the chaff, leaves the wheat upon the floor. The gospel is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap, removing all that is extraneous and worthless, but revealing the precious and the pure. We have no other way by which to discern, as ministers, the saints of God, and to separate the precious from the vile, but by faithfully preaching the truth as it is in Jesus, and observing its effects. As for ourselves, we may discover our own calling and election, and make them sure. Paul said of the Thessalonians, that he knew their election of God; and we may discover the election of other men to a very high degree of probability by their conduct and conversation; and be certified of our own election, even to infallibility, by the witness of the Spirit within that we are born of God.

If our heart be renewed by the Spirit, if we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, if we are reconciled unto God and redeemed from dead works, we may know that our names were written in the Lamb's book of life from before the foundation of the world.

This morning I am about to speak upon the way in which we may discover the chosen, making the case of David in some degree our guiding star.

**I.** I would have you remark at the outset, THE SURPRISE of all, when they found that David, the least in his father's house, was the object of the Lord's choice, a king over Israel.

Observe, that his brethren had no idea that David would be selected; such a thought had never entered into their heads. If the question had been asked of them, "Who among you will ever attain to the kingdom?" they would have selected any of the other seven, but they would certainly have passed by their brother David. He seems to have been thoroughly despised by his brothers. Eliab addresses him in a tone of scorn when he comes to the valley of Elah: "Because of thy pride and the naughtiness of thine heart, to see the battle art thou come." This mode of speech was no doubt such as he usually employed towards the young man. I suppose that David had been one by himself. The sports of the seven were often such that he could not engage in them. He was no companion for them. If they at any time perpetrated any unjust or unrighteous deed; if, as probably a band of seven young men in the hey-day of youth were likely to do, they were bold in courses of sinful mirth, David would follow the example of Joseph, and act as a reprover in their midst, and consequently he fell under their contempt. He was with his flock on the mountain side when they were making merry with their cups; his book and his harp were his solace, contemplation was his great delight, and his God his best company, while his brothers found no pleasure in divine things. He, like our Lord, could say, "For thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children." Psalm lxix. 7, 8. Like Joseph, he was "the dreamer" of the family in the esteem of the rest. They thought him moon-struck when he considered the heavens, and called him mad when he meditated both day and night in God's law. Now, beloved friend to whom I address myself, you may be one of those whom God has looked upon with an eye of love from before the foundation of the world, and yet, in the family to which you belong you may be overlooked and forgotten. Your own brethren have formed a very low opinion of your

abilities, and they have a perfect contempt for the singularity of your character. You are as a speckled bird among your own kinsfolk; you cannot enjoy what they enjoy; your loves and your longings run in a different channel from theirs. Suffer not their contempt to break your heart. Remember David once stood in your position, and there was yet another in the earlier days upon the crown of whose head the blessing of the eternal hills descended though he was separated from his brethren; and so may heaven's enriching smile yet rest on you, for the Lord seeth not as man seeth. The rejected of men are often the beloved of the Lord.

It is more painful to notice that David's father should have had no idea of David's excellence. A father has naturally more love to his child than a brother to his brother, and frequently the youngest child is the darling; but David does not seem to have been the tender one of his father. Jesse calls him the least, and if I understand the word which he uses in the original, there is something more implied than his being the youngest; he was the least in the estimation of the ill-judging parent. It is strange that he should have been left out when the rest were summoned to the feast, and I cannot acquit Jesse of fault in having omitted to call his son, when that feast was a special religious service. At a sacrifice all should be present; when the prophet comes none should be away, and yet it was not thought worth while to call David, although one would think a servant might have kept the sheep, and so the whole family might have met on so hallowed an occasion; yet no son was left in the field but David, all the others were assembled. It sometimes happens (but O how wrongly!) that one in the family is overlooked, even by his parent, in his hopes and prayers. The father seems to think, "God may he pleased to convert William; he may call Mary; I trust in his providence we shall see John grow up to be a credit to us; but as for Richard or Sarah, I do not know what will ever become of them." How often will parents have to confess that they have misjudged, and that the one upon whom they have set the black mark, has been after all the joy and comfort of their lives, and has given them more satisfaction than all the rest put together. Art thou such an one, young man? Art thou painfully conscious that thou hast a narrow share in thy parent's heart? Be not downcast, distressed, or broken-hearted about this. Thou farest as David did before thee, and if he the favored servant of God, the man after God's own heart, could put up with his position, be not thou too proud to abide in it, for if thy father and thy mother forsake thee, if the Lord take thee up, he will be better to thee than the best of parents.

It is clear also that Samuel, God's servant, had at first no idea of David's election. The brethren advanced one by one, and Samuel, using his human judgment, was ready to select any other rather than David. The minister of God, if he be truly called and sent, has a yearning in his soul to bring out God's chosen from their hidden state. His eye is quick to discern the first tokens of grace in a renewed soul. But sometimes the Christian minister is deceived. He consults with flesh and blood, and selects Eliab, the man with a fine person, whose noble countenance bespeaks something above the ordinary level, whose whole frame is so admirably fashioned that he is goodly to look upon. How true is it that the Lord taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The gifts of personal appearance often become snares instead of blessings; "beauty is deceitful, and favor is vain." The Lord hath not chosen Eliab. Then rank will come before the minister, and if he sees a person of high estate cheerfully listening to the gospel, he is very ready to think, "Surely the Lord hath chosen him." But how often these are but birds of passage in our congregation who never tarry long enough to build a nest in the sanctuary. Mere curiosity brings them, and a new curiosity carries them elsewhere. Surely the Lord hath not often chosen these Abinadabs. Again, others are so well educated, that when the Word is preached, they appreciate the style in which it is delivered, and the remarks which they make concerning it are so sensible and so judicious, that the preacher is apt to say, "Surely the Lord hath chosen these!" And yet how often the educated are too proud to believe the simplicities of Christ, and the intellectual turn on the heel because the gospel is scarcely refined enough for their taste. At times, we feel sure that we have now pitched upon the right man, for we are charmed with our hearer's natural amiability of disposition, and are cheered by his tenderness and susceptibility of mind to religious impressions; and yet we are disappointed. Many lovely blossoms never become fruits, and hopeful saplings prove not to be plants of the Lord's right hand planting, and therefore are plucked up. At times, too, we hear such admirable conversation about religion, that we conclude, "Now we have found out the chosen of the Lord." We have sat in company, and heard young men use devout expressions which implied no ordinary depth of scriptural knowledge; we have heard those persons pray, and have admired their great gift in prayer; they have addressed religious assemblies and spoken with a high degree of fluency, and our heart said, "Surely the Lord hath chosen these!" and, yet, my brethren in the ministry wilt tell you that often out of the many hopefuls who have passed before them, they have found many to be heartbreakers, and few who gave them

any real satisfaction as to their conversion to God. Meanwhile, the very one whom we overlooked, the least one in the assembly, has been the David upon whom God's blessing has fallen. Oh, some of you have listened to our word these ten years and more, and you have been impressed again and again, and yet you are unconverted. We oft thought you must be the chosen of God when we marked your tears and your apparent feeling, but up till now you are without any evidence of election. On the other hand, there has dropped into this place a drunkard, and there has strayed into these aisles a harlot, and the mighty grace of God has converted them, and they are rejoicing now in the full forgiveness of their sins, while you are yet "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." How true is that word, "the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before you." How matchless is the sovereignty of God! "His ways are past finding out." The very poorest, the most illiterate, the meanest and most obscure, the fools, the babes, the things despised, yea, "the things that are not," doth he choose, to bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. It strikes me that there was one person more astonished when David was anointed than even his brothers, or his father, or the prophet-and that was himself. He was a wonder unto many, but chiefly to himself. He had communed with God alone beneath the spreading trees; he had sung the praises of Jehovah in the wilderness where he had led his flocks, by the waterside he had tuned his harp, and made the rocks echo with the sweet music of his grateful soul; but he never dreamed of being a king. If a prophet had said to him, "The Lord will take thee from following the sheep to be ruler over his people Israel, and he will be with thee whithersoever thou goest, and cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and make thee a name like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth," he would have cried, "What am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? Is this the manner of men, O Lord God." So, dear friend, you may be truly a child of God, but you may, as yet, have no clear view of the high and noble calling to which God has ordained you. Your trembling faith hath laid its hand upon the head of Jesus, and you trust you are forgiven; but as yet you do not know the grandeur and dignity to which faith exalts every heir of heaven. Now, let me whisper in thine ear word concerning thy present greatness and the glory which is yet to be revealed in thee. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Thou art justified by faith, and thou hast peace with God, and dost thou not know

that, “Whom he justifies, them he also glorifies?” Thou shalt be surely glorified. Dost thou know the reason of this? It is because thou art “elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Yes, poor trembler, the thoughts of God were exercised concerning thee before the stars began to dart their rays through the thick darkness; Jehovah-Jesus wrote thy name upon his heart, and engraved it on the palms of his hands before the skies were stretched abroad. Be thou of good courage, there is a kingdom for thee! The sure mercies of David have ordained thee to overcome and to sit down upon Jesus’ throne, even as he has overcome and is set down with his Father upon his throne. Be thou glad henceforth, for it is the Father’s good pleasure to give thee the kingdom. Methinks I see thee all surprised, and thou sayest, “How can it be? I! chosen of God! My many sins, my great infirmities, my doubts, my barrenness in God’s service, the coldness of my heart, all these make me go mourning. Can it be that yet he hath ordained me to a kingdom?” It is even so. Let thy faith grasp the truth, and go thy way rejoicing.

Remember, dear friend, that it matters not what your occupation may be, you may yet have the privilege of the kingdom. David was but a shepherd and yet he was raised to the throne, and so shall each believer be. You may be obscure and unknown, in your father’s house the very least, and yet you may share a filial part in the divine heart. You may be among those who never would be mentioned except as mere units of the general census, without parts, without position; you may almost think yourself to have less than the one talent; you may conceive yourself to be a worm and no man, and like David you may say, “I was as a beast before thee;” and yet think of this, that the marvellous election of God can stoop from the highest throne of glory to lift the beggar from the dunghill and set him among princes.

**II.** We shall now turn your thoughts to THE TOKEN of election, the secret mark which the Lord sets in due time upon the chosen.

In due time every chosen person receives the seal of grace. That stamp is a new heart and a right spirit. Let all men understand that a new heart is the privy seal of the Divine One, the broad arrow of the King of kings. Men look upon the outward appearance as the mark of favor, but God looketh at the heart as the token of his choice. We are not to suppose David was chosen to salvation because of the natural goodness of his heart, for he tells

us himself that he was “born in sin, and shapen in iniquity;” although we are willing to grant that when God had renewed his heart as the result of his sovereign grace, a goodness of heart constituted a qualification for the kingdom, just as grace is a fitness for glory, but the righteousness of heart was itself the gift of sovereign grace, and was the effect and not the cause of the primary and eternal election which fixed on David. We do not intend to discuss the reason of God’s election,-let us not be misunderstood-of that we know nothing; we believe that God chooses wisely, but he chooses from reasons not known to men, probably reasons which could not be understood by us. All we know is, “Even so father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” We are now speaking of the way by which God seals his elect and distinguishes his chosen ones, after his grace has operated upon them. They are distinguished by having a heart that differs from other men. May we be able thus to discover whether we are among them or not!

What kind of heart had David? We may find it out by his Psalms. We cannot tell when some of the Psalms were written, but if any of them were written in his youth, the twenty-third was certainly one. That beautiful pastoral poem opens a window into the heart of David, let us look through it, and we shall soon perceive that he possessed a believing heart. How sweet is the sentence, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” Happy David! He had summed up all his wants and cares, he knew that he wanted pardon for sin, and grace to preserve him from evil, wisdom to guide him in the perilous paths of youth, strength to aid him in the conflicts which were before him; but instead of looking to himself or to friends, he turns away from all created good to God, and by faith he says, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” Here is a grand mark of divine election. Dear friend, dost thou rest in God for everything? Has thy heart given up all confidence in itself? “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.” Has thy heart given up all trust in thy fellow? for “Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.” Hast thou seen the emptiness of thine own doings, and willings, and beings, and wishings, and hast thou taken the Lord as he reveals himself in the page of Scripture-Father, Son, and Spirit, to be thine all? If thou dost so trust, thou needest not fear thine election, for when God looks into thine heart, he sees in thy faith the symbol and sign of his sovereign grace; for never was there a simple faith in himself where there had not been his hand at work, and his heart ordaining to eternal life.

We note, as we read the psalm, that David's heart was also a -meditative heart. Mark the words, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." He elsewhere writes: "My meditation of him shall be sweet." The whole book of Psalms, which is David's life written out in poetic characters, proves that he was much given to meditation on heavenly subjects. Alone there on the mountains, down by the rippling brooks, wherever he had to conduct the flocks, there he set up an altar to his God, and made an oratory for himself. Much sweet intercourse was carried on between David and his God which Eliab knew nothing of, and into which Abinadab could not enter. Read the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, and you will see that he won for himself all the blessings which by inspiration he sang of in the first Psalm. He meditated upon the law of his God both day and night. Dear friend, is that your case? When your thoughts get free, do they fly away as the dove does to its dovecote-right away to God? Can you say with David, that his words are sweet to your taste? Is the very name of God dear to you? Do you delight yourself in him? Do you meditate much upon the person of Jesus Christ? Remember that by your thoughts you may judge your state, and if your heart does not meditate in God's statutes, you certainly miss one of the signs of divine election; for elect souls are brought out in due time to find a delight in the ways and words of God.

Go on with the Psalm, and I think you will be struck with the humble heart which David had, for all the way through he does not praise himself. "He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul." See, he has no crown for his own head; the crown is all for the mighty one who is his shepherd. His soul was in his pen when he wrote, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory." David was none of your strutting peacocks who cannot be content unless all eyes are upon them; he sang God's praises as the nightingale will sing in the dark when no human ear is listening and no eye is admiring. He was content to bloom unseen, knowing that the sweetness of a renewed heart is never wasted on the desert air. He was satisfied with God alone as his auditor, and he coveted not the high opinion of man. Before his God how high he rose, and yet how low he bowed. How deeply did he feel his indebtedness to him who gave him all, and how zealously did he ascribe his salvation, and glory and strength, unto him who had been from the first to the last his helper. He would have enjoyed the verse in which Asaph alludes to his low estate, "He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following



the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance." O for a heart free from all haughtiness.

We should altogether fail in describing David if we were to omit other qualifications. His was a holy heart. Observe in the same Psalm, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." David delighted not in iniquity; the men of Belial he put far from him. "A liar shall not tarry in my sight" said he. He loved the people of God, he styles them, "The excellent of the earth in whom is all my delight." Holiness which becomes God's house was very delightful to David's soul. He loved the commandments of God because of their holiness. "Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it." Psalm 119:140. I grant you that he did once fall into grievous sin, but that was an exception to a gracious rule. His rule was holiness. The best of men are men at the best, and therefore they may slip, but oh! how bitterly David mourned to his dying day the evil into which he fell. "He was a man after God's own heart, and his way was ordered according to holiness."

Note, what a brave heart beat in his breast. Where will you find a braver man than David? "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." It is this David who, while the cringing host of Israel flies from combat, enters the lists with the boasting Philistine, and brings deliverance unto Israel. Hear ye the stripling's valorous voice: "Thou comest against me with sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." How bold was David in most cases! There were times when he, like the children of Ephraim, turned his back in the day of battle; take for instance, when he played the fool before Achish; but in other cases, his soul was set against the Lord's enemies, and though an host encamped against him, his heart did not fear; though war was waged against him, in this was he confident, for he wore the breastplate of dauntless courage. The Psalm right bravely puts it, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Let me remind you, that he had a very contented and grateful heart. I do not know a better picture of David in his early days than that which Bunyan gives us of the shepherd, who was singing in the Valley of Humiliation —

*“He that is down needs fear no fall;  
I am content with what I have,  
He that is low, no pride;  
Little be it or much;*

*He that is humble ever shall  
And Lord, contentment still I crave,  
Have God to be his guide.  
Because thou savest such.”*

Here is David’s version of the very same sentiment, “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.” He had all his heart could wish. I do trust, dear friends, we can some of us humbly claim that we possess such a heart as this, and oh, that my tongue may be able to say without deceit, “Yes, Lord, my soul is satisfied with what thou dost ordain, whatever thy will is, it shall be my will.”

You should further observe the constancy of David’s heart. He says, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” He was not one of the Pliables, who set out and turn back again at the first slough into which they tumble; he was no Demas, ready to forsake his profession to win this present evil world; but all the days of his life he abode close to the way of the Lord, and remained as a servant in God’s house. By such marks may we know our election. I would God that those who are so positive of their election, would condescend sometimes to try themselves by scriptural marks and evidences. We are told, by certain divines, that we should never doubt our safety. Beloved, we should never doubt God, but I am inclined to think that no man who exercises a holy watchfulness over himself, and a holy earnestness to be found accepted at the last, can be at all times without doubts as to his own interest in Christ. I am persuaded that the hymn-

*“’Tis a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought”*

is the experience of every child of God, more or less, and that there are seasons when that is the best hymn which a man can sing. It is seldom that I doubt my interest in Christ Jesus, but it is very often that I ask myself, “Is this confidence well grounded?” And if I were afraid to question myself, if

I were afraid to go back to the foundation and search myself thoroughly, if I always went on, blindly confident, and never examined myself whether I were in the faith, methinks that would be an omen of being given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie, I have labored in your presence to preach up the privilege of strong faith; I have urged you to strive after full assurance of faith; but never let these lips say a word or a syllable against that holy carefulness which makes a broad distinction between presumption and assurance. Depend upon it, privilege preached always without precept will breed a surfeit and lethargy in God's people: what we want at certain seasons is, not a promise, but a telling, burning word of self-examination, the flavour of which we may not like, but which shall work in our souls spiritual good of a more lasting sort than sweet comforts would bring to us. Examine yourselves, dear friends, then, by this. I do not ask you whether your hearts are perfect—they are not; I do not ask you whether your hearts never go astray, for they are prone to wander; but I do ask you: Is your heart resting upon Jesus Christ? Is it a believing heart? Does your heart meditate upon divine things? Does it find its best solace there? Is your heart a humble heart? Are you constrained to ascribe all to sovereign grace? Is your heart a holy heart? Do you desire holiness? Do you find your pleasure in it? Is your heart bold for God? Does your heart ascribe praises to God? Is it a grateful heart? and is it a heart that is wholly fixed upon God, desiring never to go astray? If it be, then you have marks of election. Search for these, and add to all your searching this prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my ways; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Let me beseech you to pray God to pull your comforts into pieces if they are false comforts, I have conjured my God on bended knee full often to let me know the worst of my case, and if I be deluded, deceived, or deceiving, I do pray him to tear the bandage from my eyes and take away every balm from my wounded heart except the balm of Gilead, and never to let me rest till I am soundly grounded and bottomed on Christ Jesus, and nowhere else but there. Do make sure work in this case. If you must have "huts," and "ifs," and "peradventures," have them about your estates and your property, but do not about your souls. May the Holy Spirit help you to be often using the crucible to see whether your profession is true gold or no.

**III.** The third point is a very interesting one; it is MANIFESTATION, or the way in which the election of God is made apparent to ourselves and others.

We cannot see the hearts of our fellow-men, and therefore the heart can never be to us the way of distinguishing the elect of God, except so far as it is seen in the acts and words. Now the first sign by which this election was made known to David himself and to a few others, who probably did not know much about it, was by his being anointed. Samuel took a horn of oil, and poured it on David. I do not think Jesse knew the full meaning of it. I feel sure that the seven brethren did not, for if they had, someone or other would have told Saul. Master Trapp says, seven can only keep a secret when six of them know nothing about it. I am inclined to think that though they saw him anointed with oil, they could not bring themselves to think that such a despised one as David was really anointed for the kingdom. They saw the symbol, but probably did not understand the inward grace. But David did; David knew that he was now to be a king, and though he never stretched out a hand or lifted a finger to get that throne for himself, though he often spared his enemy, Saul, when killing him might have brought him suddenly to the crown, yet he knew that he should one day reign over Israel. Beloved, there is a season when God anoints his people. They have believed, but there may elapse a little time between the believing and the conscious anointing; but suddenly, when the Lord has illuminated their hearts to know and understand divine things clearly, the Spirit of God comes with a sealing power upon them, and from that day forward they rejoice to know that they have the indwelling of the Spirit, and that they are set apart for God. I pray that some of you who have been lately converted, may get your sealing from this day forward. If you shall receive it, you will be different men from what you were. Already saved by grace, you will then begin to feel that force, and power, and vigor, which renders the man of faith the master of the world. If you are anointed, you will feel the royal blood within your veins. As yet you do not know your kingship, but if the Spirit of God shall descend upon you in plenteous measure, you will know your dignity, and you will act like kings, reigning over inbred sins, and seeking, as much as lieth in you, to exercise the royal priesthood which the Master has conferred upon you. This inward sealing may be recognised among the saints; a few may be able to see in you the sealing, do not expect that many will, for it is only to yourself that it becomes the infallible witness that you are elected of God.

The manifestation, however, went on in another way. After the anointing it appears that David became a man distinguished for the valor of his deeds. Saul's servant in recommending him says of him, that he was "a mighty

valiant man, and a man of war.” Your election will be discovered by this; you will do what others cannot do. An elect soul, when the Spirit of God is upon him, can answer that question, “What do ye more than others?” not proudly, but still calmly he can say, “-There are many things which others do not and cannot do, which are easy to me through Christ who strengtheneth me.” You will be able now, dear friends, to break through the toils of custom; to wrestle with the lion of worldliness, to exhibit patience under suffering, to forgive your worst enemy without difficulty, to serve God in deeds of faith, to venture your good name content to see it trodden in the ditch if you may exalt Christ; in flue, through the Holy Spirit you will do and dare where others are sluggishly cowards; you will dash forward to the conflict expecting the victory because God is with you, or you will be willing to suffer because the Lord has strengthened you to bear all things for his sake. Your election will be best known to your fellow men by your deeds of valor.

It appears, too, that he was very prudent. The same witness-bearer said he was “a man prudent in matters.” Such will you be, when as the elect of God the Spirit of wisdom rests upon you. You will not be in a hurry, you have nothing to gain; you will not be alarmed, you have nothing to lose; you have God and therefore you have all things; you cannot lose your God, and therefore you can lose nothing; and being in no hurry, you will have time to judge and weigh matters. “He that believeth shall not make haste.” Life will be with you no confused scramble. You will not be blundering out of one error, into another, because you will take your matters before God in prayer; you will consult the oracle, and your heart will be guided of the Lord. You will, if you live near to God, know when you come to a point of difficulty which way to turn; you will hear a voice which saith, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” You will know, when you come to a difficulty where human wisdom is utterly worthless, how to fall fiat on your face and wait until the strong arm comes to deliver you. You will be taught in the things of God and bold to teach others also, and so, daily, your election will be made known to your fellow men.

Mark well, that one of the ways by which your election will become clear and sure to all God’s people will be this:-if you are anointed king as David was before you, you will come into conflict with Saul. It cannot be possible that the chosen of God shall for ever live in peace with the heirs of hell. He who put an enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, takes care that that old enmity shall never die. The two first men

of woman born, were enemies of one another for this reason, and until Christ shall come that same enmity will exist. Saul may like thee for a little time if thou canst play well upon an instrument and drive away his melancholy, but when Saul finds thee out and discovers thee to be the anointed king, he will hurl his javelin at thee. The world is very satisfied with some ministers, and with some Christians, because they very much resemble itself; but as soon as the world finds out “this is a man separate from us, of a different nature and of a different country,” it cannot but hate the man—it must do so. Dost thou expect the world’s good word? then go thy way and flatter it, and bow to it, and cringe, and be its servant, and thou shalt have thy reward in everlasting contempt; but art thou willing to take thy lot without the camp with Jesus, and to be recognised as being not of this world, because he hath chosen you out of the world, then expect to receive hard measures, to be misconstrued and misrepresented, and to be despised, for thy reward shall be when he cometh, and that reward shall outweigh all that thou endurest here below.

I think David was never more clearly manifested to be God’s elect, except at the last of all, than when he was an outlaw. He never seems such a grand man as when he is among the tracks of the wild goats of Engedi; never so great as when he is passing through the wilderness while Saul is hunting him, or standing at midnight over the sleeping form of his enemy, and saying, “I will not touch him, for he is the Lord’s anointed.” We do not read of many faults, and slips, and errors then. The outlawed David is most certainly manifested to all Israel to be the chosen of God, because the chosen of man cannot abide him. The happiest and best days, I believe, with the people of God, are when they are most outlawed by men, when they are put out of the synagogue, and when he that should kill them would think that he did God service. The brightest days for Christian piety were the days of martyrdom and persecution. Scotland has many saints, but she never has had such rich saints as those who lived in covenanting times; England has had many rich divines who have taught the word, but the Puritanic age was the golden age of England’s Christian literature. Depend upon it you will find in your own life you may have many days of heaven upon earth, but the place of persecution and rejection will be the spot where Jesus Christ manifests himself the most to you. Are you resolved not to be conformed to this world? Are you willing to bear with Christ the brunt of the battle, and like the living fish to swim against the stream? Are you ready to stand out like the other holy children in the days of

Nebuchadnezzar, and to say like the apostles in the days of the high priests, "Whether it be right to serve God or men, judge ye?" Have ye cast off the fear of man? Have ye taken up the cross to wear as your best and greatest ornament and treasure? If so, you are giving the very best evidence of having been chosen out of the world because you are not of the world.

Remember, to conclude, that after all conflicts were over, David was crowned. All Israel and all Judah sent to fetch David, and they made him king; amidst the blast of the horns, and the homage, and songs and joy of the people, David, the elected one, was publicly recognised; the crown was put upon his head, the imperial mantle graces his person, he signed the decrees, and his word was law from Dan to Beersheba. The day cometh when the like shall be true of the meanest and the most despised of God's chosen. Truly said the apostle, "it doth not yet appear;" we cannot see it, only faith can discern it, but it shall appear-it cometh-the appearing draweth nigh. Our head shall yet wear the crown, for we shall reign with Christ Jesus. Methinks even this earth, which has despised us, shall yet know us as kings when we shall reign with Him. We shall yet put on the imperial purple; from the river, even to the ends of the earth, the saints shall possess the kingdom; and when Jesus comes to judge the people, we shall judge angels, sitting as assessors with him, giving our verdict, and adding our "Amens" to all his sentences. Nay, even in heaven itself, angels shall be our servitors; they shall be ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, and we shall sit upon thrones. Oh! Christian, thou knowest not the pomp which shall yet surround thee! Thou hast had some glimmering thought of the Savior's glory and the Savior's dignity, but hast thou not forgotten that all this is thine?-for we shall be like him when we shall see him as he is. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." The same place for you as for the Savior, and you shall behold his glory, and you shall be partakers of it. Why, then, should you fear? Why should you be downcast and dismayed by reason of the trials on the way? Come! pluck up courage. An hour with thy God will make up for it all. One glimpse of him, and what will persecution seem? You have been called ugly names, and ill words have been pelted at you, but what will they be when you shall hear him say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." There! the world's thunder is gone like a whisper amidst the more glorious roll of angelic acclamations, and the hiss of enmity is all forgotten amidst the kiss of love which the Savior gives to all his faithful ones. Cheered by

the reward, I pray you press forward! Greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt shall you have who can renounce all for Christ's sake! "Be ye faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life." God grant that we may all be found numbered among the election of grace, and none of us be cast away, and his shall be the praise for ever and ever. Amen.



# ZEALOTS.

NO. 639

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 16TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Simon called Zelotes.” — Luke 6:15.*

SIMON called Zelotes has apparently two surnames in scripture, but they mean the same thing. He is called Simon the Canaanite in Hebrew — not because he was an inhabitant of Cana or a Canaanite, but that word, when interpreted, means precisely the same as the Greek word Zelotes. He was called Simon the Zealot. I suppose that he had this name before his conversion. It is thought by some that he was a member of that very fierce and fanatical political sect of the Jews, called the Zealots, by whose means the siege of Jerusalem was rendered so much more bloody than it would have been; but this does not seem very probable, for the sect of the Zealots had scarcely arisen in the time of the Savior, and therefore we are inclined to think with Hackett in his exposition of the Acts, that he was so called because of his zealous attachment to his religion as a Jew, for there were some in the different classes of Jewish society who were so excessively full of zeal as to gain the name of Zealot. But it strikes me that he must have been a zealot after conversion too, for within that sacred circle which surrounded our Lord, every word was truth, and the Master would not have allowed any of his disciples to have worn a surname which was not expressive or truthful. He was Simon the Zealot while in the darkness and blindness of his mind he knew not the Messiah; he surely could not have been less Simon the Zealot when, gifted with the Holy Spirit, he went forth to cast out devils, and to heal the sick, and to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. I should be glad if many among us would earn the same title by so living that men would call them zealots, or even “fanatics,” for this is so sleepy an age concerning religious things, that to be called fanatic, now-a-days, is one of the highest honors a man can have conferred

upon him. May we so act and live that we might truthfully wear the title of Christian Zealots.

We shall occupy your time, this morning first of all, by some like description of the 'unconverted Zealot and then, secondly, by some few remarks upon the Christian Zealot.

## **I. LET US PORTRAY THE UNCONVERTED ZEALOT.**

Zeal frequently expends itself on other things than religion. You will find many zealots not religious in any sense of the word. We have seen lately a few political zealots. The one important matter of their lives is the defense of the Whig or the Tory interest. It appears as if they would sacrifice their business, nay, in their furore they think everything a trifle so long as they can but vindicate some favourite opinion. Such was Saul, the king of Israel. He was such a zealot for Israel and for Judah, that in his zeal he slew the Gibeonites. He was politically a zealot: he thought that the Gibeonites, being in the land, ate the bread which belonged to the Sons of Israel, and occupied the cities which belonged of right to the tribe of Benjamin, and, therefore, violating all covenants and solemn oaths, and bringing upon the nation a great judgment, he slew the Gibeonites.

Many are scientific zealots; they will sacrifice health in sitting over mixtures of deleterious drugs to examine chymical combinations; or they will pass through feverish countries among savage men to discover the source of a river, or measure the height of a mountain.

We can readily find business zealots: their shop windows scarcely need shutters, for business is never over; the Sunday itself is not enclosed for worship; they steal that day for keeping their books; they make haste to be rich, and they are not innocent; they plunge into this speculation and the other; they often bring their bodies to sickness and their minds to madness in their zeal for riches. You do not find that the world cries out against zeal in business, and in science, and in politics. Nay, men can admire it there, but the moment you bring it into the court of the Lord's house, then straightway they hold up their hands with astonishment, or open their mouths with blasphemy, for men cannot endure that we should make eternal things real and spend our strength for them; they would have us reserve our energies for the matters in which they take so deep an interest. Brethren, we would not condemn the use of zeal in the common affairs of life, for zeal is essential to success; we only wish that Christians would take

copy from worldly men and be half as earnest and half as ambitious to maintain and increase the kingdom of their Lord and Master, as some men are after petty trifles or selfish aggrandisements. Understand then that a man may be a zealot, and yet there may not be a trace of religion in him, for his zeal may run in quite a different channel.

The unconverted zealot, should his zeal expend itself upon religion, is generally exceedingly boastful. Look at Jehu, as he bids Jehonadab the son of Rechab ride with him in his chariot, vain-gloriously exclaiming, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord." He cannot kill the worshippers of Baal without some one standing by to admire how he devotes himself entirely to Jehovah. Unconverted men, when full of zeal, are almost all Jehus; they must have some admiring eye; the clap of approbation is essential to the life and vigor of their earnestness. Not so the true Christian, he is as zealous for his Master when he stands alone or in the midst of derision as in the time when religion is honorable. Let us take care ever to avoid all boastfulness; let us serve our Master as Jehu did, and better than he, but let us never say, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord." As you travel over the mountains and are smitten with thirst, you look for the cooling stream, but the traveler who has often passed the hills never stoops to drink of the little streamlets which run uncovered down the mountain side; he knows that their exposure to the heat of the sun has warmed the water and taken away its grateful freshness and coolness; but he looks for the trickling rill which gushes fresh from the rock or bubbles up as a spring, or has found its way under the moss and great stones all hidden from the light, and he loves to satisfy himself thereat. It is thus with our gifts and graces. If we expose them to public view, they lose their acceptability with the Most High God, but if we keep ourselves as much as possible from all ostentation, and seek to serve God humbly and in quiet, Jehovah himself finds delight in the gracious works of his own beloved people. May the Lord keep us then from being boastful zealots.

The unconverted zealot is generally an ignorant zealot. "I bear them witness," says Paul, "that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." The Pharisees were very fanatical. They were ignorant of God's righteousness, and they went about to establish their own righteousness. They had not learnt the feebleness of the principle of law, and therefore, they struggled on and on to attain eternal life by it; they did not know the force and strength of the great principle of grace working through faith, and therefore they neglected it, and with all their strugglings

they came short of the kingdom of heaven. Let us beware of an ignorant zeal. How much there is of it now-a-days. Probably there is more zeal to be found among the professors of false doctrine than among the followers of the truth. How will they garnish their Churches as of old the Pharisees garnished their sepulchres! How diligently will they bedeck their altars and load them with ornaments and millinery! To what an extent of effort do they go! What asceticism will they practice! What infamy, what abuse are they not willing to endure in defending the cause of their idols and bringing back again the old superstitions of Rome. If those who are orthodox had as much zeal as the Papist and the Puseyite, it would be well for England. Oh, brethren, shun an ignorant zeal, but at the same time labor to blend zeal with your knowledge, lest your knowledge lacking force, should cease to be operative in the land. Let it be ever remembered that if we are never so zealous in a wrong faith, neither does zeal make the false true nor make us right in its prosecution. I may drink poison, devoutly believing it will do me good, but it will poison me, let me believe what I may; and so I may believe a lie never so earnestly, but it will be a lie nevertheless, and the, poison of the lie will work my soul's ruin just as surely as if I had not been so fervent in its belief, and perhaps more surely. Do not believe in the idea that every man who is sincere in his religion will come right at last. Not so. If a man is sincere and travels due North he will not reach a town in the South, and if he spur his horse never so much towards the East, he will not arrive at his destination, if that destination be a city in the West. Seek to be right. Get an understanding of the truth as God has revealed it, or otherwise all your zeal will be but wild-fire, which will do mischief rather than good.

The zeal of unconverted men, is generally partial. It may be a zeal for something good, but not for everything that is good. How zealous the Pharisee was for frequent ablutions-he would not eat bread, if never so hungry, till he had washed his hands. How excessively zealous he was to tithe the mint-it did not come to three farthings in a year- and the anise and the cummin-all these little matters must be attended to. I think I see the man looking earnestly while he strains at the gnat; how he shudders lest by any means that horrid and monstrous insect should get into his wine: if it should possibly go down his throat, what pollution he would incur! But mark the hypocrite as he turns his head the other way and he swallows a camel in the twinkling of an eye. While he can pay his mint and his anise and his cummin in full tithe, he can at the same time devour a widow's

house and cry out against the Lord of life and glory, and plot and plan against the Savior till he has dragged him to the cross of doom. This is the unconverted zealot. Zealous he is for sect and party when the whole that the sect may hold is not of more value than the gnat, and yet great fundamental doctrinal truths are forgotten, as though they were of no value whatever. Brethren, may we be earnest men of God, but I pray that we may be zealous for all truth; we must count no truth to be despicable, but take the whole Word of God as far as the Spirit of God shall reveal it unto us, and stand up for it in its entirety and completeness, and not be willing that the very least of Christ's commandments should be neglected or despised.

The zealot, again, while unconverted, is generally (if it be in his power) a persecutor. "Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church." Paul verily thought that he was doing God service when he haled men and women to prison and to death; and I doubt not there are many in this age most sincere zealots, who, if they would not quite delight in the sweet sacrifices of Smithfield, would, at any rate, like to pass a few repressive laws to put down "those wicked dissenters," and ordain one or two salutary penalties by which "those quarrelsome Baptists" might have their tongues clipped a little shorter, that they might not speak out quite so plainly concerning time infamies of the State Church. Doubtless, there is a tendency with us all to wish to impose our own opinions upon others, by all available means. The exaggeration of anxiety for our fellow-men would lead us to adopt wrong means to make them of a right opinion; we forget that men's consciences and judgments are never touched by such rude or vulgar means as threats or penalties. We should always feel that consciences and hearts are under the jurisdiction of the Most High, and in no sense whatever are they to be brought under the jurisdiction of Pope or potentate, or of any one of us, no matter how orthodox we may conceive ourselves to be. Strive earnestly for your faith, but strive lawfully. Contend zealously for the truth, but let the only fire you use be love, and the only sword the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. But zealots without grace are generally persecutors.

Without grace zealots are very bitter towards their professed brethren. We read in the epistle of the apostle James, of some who were full of strifes and envyings, and were yet members of the Church. From such zeal may the Lord of Hosts deliver us! Our brethren in the fellowship with us are not to be convinced of their errors by being knocked on the head, but by having the candle held to their eyes. If we can learn them the truth as it is

in Jesus. it shall he well; but as for carnal contention and persecution-let it he far from us.

This ungraceful picture of the zealot is not complete unless we remark that often his aims are sinister. We read of some in the epistle to the Corinthians who did zealously affect the Corinthians, but not well, for they slandered the apostle Paul; they denied his apostleship, they said that his bodily presence was weak, and his speech was contemptible; and yet they appeared very zealous, indeed far more zealous than Paul, because they wanted to alienate the mind of the Corinthian Church from the apostle, and get themselves to be made masters in God's heritage. Let us beware of a zeal for lifting up ourselves. Brethren, if we preach Christ with a view to get ourselves honored by it, we prostitute the sacred things of God, and are guilty of that very sin which was accursed in Belshazzar, when he took the golden cups of the sanctuary to drink therefrom to his own delights. Zeal must be pure. It may be fire, but it must be fire from off the altar, or else if we minister with any other fire, like Nadab and Abihu, we may be slain before the Lord. O that we would search our heart so as to be quite sure that we have no aim in all the world but Christ — "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." You may shoot well ye brave archers, but if you aim at the wrong target you will not win the prize. If you aim at anything but your Lord's honor, you shall never hear it said, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

To close this very sorry account of the unconverted zealot, he is generally but temporary in his zeal. If the zeal be good, it dies out ere long. The apostle Paul says, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." Some of you are mightily zealous at a prayer-meeting, and grow intensely warm-hearted after a season of revival; you are consecrated to God most marvellously for a month or two; you live consistently for a few weeks; you are diligent in the use of the means of grace for a short time; and then-well, you have had enough of it, I suppose, and you think enough to be as good as a feast, and so you would fain have done with heavenly things: the wind blows from another quarter, and therefore, like the weathercock you are turned by it in another way. Some of you would go to heaven, but you get plucked by the sleeve hell-wards and cannot bear a hard pull and so you turn away from Christ. One would think when you are sick that you were ripe for glory, but when you get well, ah! how different! "When he was sick," says an old legend, "the devil a monk would be," but when he got well you know how he gave up his fine intentions. There are

many now of the same sort. For a time they threaten to take the kingdom by storm; they censoriously rebuke the coldness of others; they vow to conquer hell and enter heaven, pushing the world before them and dragging the Church after them; but in a short time where nine they? They have relapsed into their former lethargy, or perhaps they have taken their zeal with them into the camp of the adversary.

Such is the unconverted zealot. Suffer two or three words before we leave him. There is much about him to imitate. Unconverted as he is, mischievous as his zeal may be, if we could pluck that sword out of his hand, of how great a use might it be to us. If sinners are Zealous in their sins, should not saints be zealous for their God? If the things of time can stir the human passions, should not the realities of eternity have a greater and more tremendously moving force? If these men will spend and he spent, and stretch every nerve and run the race merely for the crown of politics or of ambition, where are we? What idlers, what laggards are we, that we pursue the things of God with but half a heart!

*“Dear Lord, and shall we always live  
At this poor dying rate?”*

Bear this other word, also, namely, that we ought to look upon these zealots with hopefulness. When a man serves Baal thoroughly, it is a great pity and a thing to be deplored, but I think he is a man worth catching, and to be sought after. We know a sort of people who will never make much at anything. They are not very forward in sin. The devil himself cannot respect them much, they are such poor servants to him. If they ever become Christians, into the rear rank they must go; they need to be pressed forward and to receive from the strength of the Church, for power they never can impart to it. But when you get a man who is vigorous in the cause of Satan, when sovereign grace brings him down, what a trophy he becomes of its power, and how gloriously he contends for the gospel of Christ. Look at Saul of Tarsus; no man more zealous against the gospel than he, and he is second to none when he becomes a preacher of the word. Look at John Bunyan on the village green-never second, always leader, whether it was the game of cat on Sunday, or ringing the Church bells, or blasphemy, he was a prince in the devil’s camp and when he became a Christian, none like John Bunyan in thundering out the law, or preaching-fearless of pains and penalties-the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Master Bunyan says in his “Grace abounding,” that he was very

hopeful for England, because the young men of his age were so very bad, since if God would convert them, they would make such good Christians by-and-bye; and I feel a little of his mind; when I see a man come in here who is known to be a down-right sinner, I hope he may make an upright saint. Some have come in here who have been ringleaders, and have exceeded others in their sin, but instead of saying "Their case is hopeless," I have thought-now let us pray with might and main that sovereign grace may overcome his sin; who knows what he may be able to accomplish for the Church, if he be converted?

**II.** Now for a more pleasing picture, namely; THE TRUE CHRISTIAN ZEALOT-how his zeal manifests itself, how it is kept up, and what is to be said in commendation of it.

The Christian zealot-how his zeal manifests itself. First, it manifests itself in his private dealings with God. The unconverted zealot is a hypocrite; he does not come to God in private. He may use a form of private prayer, but he has no true communion with God alone. The unconverted zealot has a religion of the surface, but there is no grace within. How different is it with the Christian! That is a remarkable passage in the Revelation, where zeal is coupled with repentance. "Be zealous, therefore, and repent." I may take this as an indication that when a true Christian is zealous he is zealous in repentance-his tears come welling up from his heart. Sin is not a little distasteful, but is exceedingly disgusting to him. His faith, too, is not merely a trembling recognition of truth, but it is a firm grasp of everlasting verities. The Christian zealot, when he is alone with God, throws his whole heart into his service. Whatever may be the grace which is in exercise, he seeks to have it thoroughly and actively at work. If his heart be given to God, it is a heart full of holy fire, like a sacred censer. If he devote himself in private to any hallowed deed of fellowship or communion with God, his heart wanders not, or if it wanders, he contends with it until he has bound it with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar. Brethren, I wish you and I were more zealous. Alas! I have to complain of myself that when I try to pray, full often I cannot; when I would do good in the closet, evil is present with me. I would I had power to walk with God as Enoch did, but the cares even of the Church, let alone the vanities of life, will creep in, and the soul comes out of the closet unrefreshed, very much because it has had no zeal in its closet exercises. The true Christian zealot seeks above all things to make his private religion intensely energetic, knowing that it is the vital point of godliness.



The Christian zealot may be recognised very manifestly by his prayers. Hear his utterance in the prayer-meeting. It is no repetition of a set of sacred phrases, no going over the metaphors which have become time-worn and tedious, but he prays like a man who means it, He comes up to heaven's gate, grasps the knocker, and knocks, and knocks, and knocks again, waiting until the door is opened. He gets hold of the gates of heaven, and labors to shake them to and fro as though he would pull them up bolts and bars and all, as Samson did the gates of Gaza, rather than not prevail with God. These men, like Elias, have power to shut up heaven or to open the gates thereof. Oh, that we had more of such in our own midst. We have a few who, as soon as they stand up to pray, fire our hearts by their earnestness; may they be multiplied. The like is true of course of the private prayers of the Christian as well as of his public ones. Oh, brothers and sisters, we want more resolve when we go before God that we will have the blessing, more determination that seeing we are asking what is according to his mind we will take no denial, but will say to the angel, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Christians, seek to be zealots in prayer, pouring out your hearts like water before the Lord, and crying out with sighs and tears till like your Master you have been heard in that which you have feared.

But the zealot does not stay here, The Christian zealot is manifested in his jealousy for God's honor. The word jealous in its sound and sense is akin to the word zealous. Hear how Elijah uses it. He says, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts." He saw Baal worshipped everywhere throughout Israel, and his heart was ready to break, and the stern old man said, "Let me die: I am no better than my fathers." How sternly he slew Baal's priests. What a spectacle was that when after having mocked them because no fire came on their sacrifice, he stretched out his hands and cried, "Let it be known who is God;" and when the flame had come and his own sacrifice had been consumed, he said with a rough voice, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." Here was zeal for the Lord of Hosts springing from an awful overwhelming jealousy for God's honor and a hatred of the idols which usurped his throne. See the like in Moses. With holy jealousy, he dashes the tables of stone upon the ground, takes the golden calf, grinds it to powder, and makes a rebellious people drink of the bitter draught. Look at Phineas again, when he saw the people committing adultery as a part of the unclean rites with which they worshipped the Gods of Moab, he seized a javelin and ran them through,

and so it is said the zeal of Phineas made an atonement before the Lord. We want something of that kind-a zeal for God which will smite all error with a ruthless hand, the iconoclastic zeal which will break to pieces images of silver and of gold, however prettily they may be cast or graven; which will tear down the toys of Popery, and tread the whole in the mire as things worse than worthless because they come in the way of the Lord God of Hosts. Out on the softness which will not let some of my brethren denounce an error lest they should violate charity. The velvet in their mouths prevents their dealing with Antichrist as it ought to be dealt with. The day is come in which the Romish and Anglican Antichrists are to have no tender words used towards them. It must be war to the knife for God and for his truth against the lie which in modern times has impudence enough to show its face again,-I mean the lie that the sacrament can save, that baptism can regenerate, or that the Lord's supper is a channel of salvation. Up with grace and down with sacramentarianism; up with the truth for ever and down with falsehood. A man is no zealot and cannot be called Zelotes, unless he has a holy jealousy for the honor of Christ, and his crown, and his truth.

Nor is this all. True zeal will show itself in the abundance of a man's labors and gifts. Paul commends the zeal of the Corinthians, because they were always ready to minister to his necessities. He says, "Concerning the ministering of the saints ye have no need that I speak unto you." Zeal labors for Christ. My brethren, if you want a picture of zeal, take the apostle. How he compasses sea and land! Storms cannot stay him, mountains cannot impede his progress. He is beaten with rods, he is stoned, he is cast into prison, but the invincible hero of the cross presses on in the holy war, until he is taken up to receive a crown of glory. We do little or nothing, the most of us; we fritter away our time. O that we could live while we live; but our existence- that is all we can call it-our existence, what a poor thing it is! We run like shallow streams: we have not force enough to turn the mill of industry, and have not depth enough to bear the vessel of progress, and have not flood enough to cheer the mends of poverty. We are dry too often in the summer's drought, and we are frozen in the winter's cold. O that we might become broad and deep like the mighty stream that bears a navy and gladdens a nation. O that we may become inexhaustible and permanent rivers of usefulness, through the abundant springs from whence our supply cometh, even the Spirit of the living God.

The Christian zealot may be known by the anguish which his soul feels when his labors for Christ are not successful-the tears that channel his cheeks when sinners are not saved. Do not tell me of zeal that only moves the tongue, or the foot, or the hand; we must have a zeal which moves the whole heart. We cannot advance so far as the Savior's bloody sweat, but to something like it the Christian ought to attain when he sees the tremendous clouds of sin and the tempest of God's gathering wrath. How can I see souls damned, without emotion? How can I hear Christ's name blasphemed, without a shudder? How can I think of the multitudes who prefer ruin to salvation, without a pang. Believe me, brethren and sisters, if you never have sleepless hours, if you never have weeping eyes, if your hearts never swell as if they would burst, you need not anticipate that you will be called zealous; you do not know the beginning of true zeal, for the foundation of Christian zeal lies in the heart. The heart must be heavy with grief and yet must beat high with holy ardor; the heart must be vehement in desire, panting continually for God's glory, or else we shall never attain to anything like the zeal which God would have us know.

And to close this point of how zeal manifests itself, let me say that it is always seen, where it is genuine, in a vehement love and attachment to the person of the Savior. This is why we have not more zeal- because often the Christ preached is not a personal Christ. Have not I frequently said in this pulpit that nothing can make a man zealous like attachment to a person? When Napoleon's soldiers won so many victories, and especially in the earlier part of his career, when against such deadly odds they earned such splendid triumphs, what was the reason? The "little corporal" was there, and whenever it came to a desperate rush he was the first to cross the bridge or charge the enemy, always exposing himself to danger; and their attachment to his person, and their love and admiration of his valor, made them follow at his heels, swift to victory. Have not we heard of those who threw themselves in the way of the cannon ball to save his life? There could not have been such triumphs if there had not been a man who knew how to govern men by attaching them to himself. And oh, the person of the Savior! What attachment can there be equal to that which binds a Christian to his Lord? What person can there ever be, out of whose lips come such golden chains to bind all hearts? When we see him, our hearts glow with sacred fervor; when we think of him, our soul is all on fire. What can we not do in his presence? what will we not suffer when he cheers us? There are no impossibilities-nay, even difficulties have ceased to be, when Jesus

Christ shall come, and our hearts are full of love to him. It is a constant and unfailing sign of a true zealot, that his attachment to his Master's person is deep and fervent, and he cannot forget him who redeemed him by blood.

This brings us now, in the next place, to think awhile of how this zeal is maintained and kept up. To keep up a good fire of zeal we must have much fuel, and the fire will partake of the quality of the fuel, so that it must be good firing to make holy zeal. If I understand aright, zeal is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and genuine zeal draws its life and vital force from the continued operations of the Holy Ghost in the soul. Next to this, zeal feeds upon truths like these. It is stirred by the ruin of sinners. The very sight of sinners makes a right-hearted man zealous for their conversion. Ride through our streets mile after mile, turn down the narrower streets, enter the courts, go down the alleys-do not be disgusted with those tumbling houses-go in and go up stairs; see how many there are in one room, mark what poverty, what squalor, what filth; just go into certain quarters and see what ignorance, what crime! Methinks the city missionary has before him constantly enough to keep his zeal at fever heat, and if we ourselves went more often into some of the lowest dens of this huge city, we should go back to our closets, feeling, "Gracious God! I have not thought of these people as I ought to do, for instead of being up and doing with all my might, I have been trifling and wasting my time." Well, but what is London? this nation of London, what is it? It is only a drop in the bucket compared with the millions that are still in darkness. Let any man think upon Hindostan; let him reflect, if he will, upon China; let him take any one country and consider that there is not a missionary to a million in many of those places, and that the missionaries who are there might many of them as well have been at home, for they are missionaries who Christianize people by baptizing them, and know little about the Spirit's work upon the soul. What is said about many of the converts made by mere ritual preaching and by baptismal ceremonies? Why it is well known that in some parts of heathendom the worst scoundrels are the nominal Christians, the reason being because they were not made Christians by being converted, but by being baptized, and so an indelible dishonor is put upon Christ by carrying on missionary operations on the principle of baptizing people who are not Christians and labelling them the people of Christ, while in their hearts they are more deceitful than the heathen themselves. Only think of the need there is for a sound, honest preaching of the gospel, the preaching of the doctrines which really do change the soul, and the coming down of

the Holy Spirit to deal personally with individuals. All wholesale conversion of tribes and nations by calling them Christians when they are merely civilized is an evil and an abomination. The wants of the age are enough, if a man has any sense of what eternal realities are, to make us zealous-zealous to the highest pitch.

And next, Christian zeal feeds itself upon a sense of gratitude.

*“Loved of my God, for him again,  
With love intense I burn,  
Chosen of him ere time began,  
I choose him inn return.”*

Look to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged, and you will see abundant reason why you should spend and he spent for God.

Zeal for God feeds itself upon the thought of the eternal future. It looks with tearful eyes down to the flames of hell and it cannot slumber: it looks up with anxious gaze to the glories of heaven, and it cannot but bestir itself. Zeal for God thinks of death, and hears the hoofs of the white horse with the skeleton rider close behind. Zeal for God feels that all it can do is little compared with what is wanting, and that time is short compared with the work to be done, and therefore it devotes all that it has to the cause of its Lord.

Above all, zeal for God feeds itself on love to Christ Lady Powerscourt says somewhere, “If we want to be thoroughly hot with zeal, we must go near to the furnace of the Savior’s love.” Get to know how Christ loved you, and you cannot but love him. Do but know how he was spit upon and despised, and how he bled and died for us, and we cannot but feel that we can do and bear all things for his name’s sake.

Above all, Christian zeal must be sustained by a vigorous inner life. If we let our inner life dwindle, if it begins to be dwarfish, if our heart beats slowly before God, we shall not know zeal; but if all be strong and vigorous within, then we cannot but feel a loving anxiety to see the kingdom of Christ come, and his will done on earth, even as it is in heaven.

I have to close by commending zeal; let my words be few, but let them be weighty here. In commending zeal, let me say, methinks it should commend itself to every Christian man without a word of mine, but if you must have it, remember that God himself is zealous. We read that when

Christ comes as the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, then the government is to be upon his shoulders, and of his kingdom there is to be no end; but scripture adds, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." God has been zealous in judgment. Ezekiel tells us that God was zealous when he came forth to smite his foes, but oh, how zealous he is in grace! It is a wonderful thing that we should use such language, but the Scripture is our warrant, when God puts his hand to the work of saving the elect, he is filled with zeal; there is no slumber, no want of diligence with God in the work of conversion and saving. For Zion's sake he never rests, nor will he rest till Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and shall he satisfied. God is earnest, God is zealous; children of God, he imitators of him, as dear children.

Christ was zealous. We read of him that the zeal of God's house had eaten him up, and when he took the scourge of small cords and purged the temple, John tells us, that it was written of him, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." A prophet tells us that he was clothed with zeal as with a cloak. He had not zeal over a part of him, but was clothed with it as with some great cloak covering him from head to foot. Christ was all zeal. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business," is one of his utterances, while yet a child; and from the very first to time last, it was his meat and his drink to do his Father's will. At what a rate he drove! How swift the chariot-wheels of duty went with him till the axles grew hot with speed. Brethren, ye have Christ for an example. Does not this suffice you?

Surely I can only descend in argument, but not ascend-see the holy angels who nine to be your blessed companions, nine they not flames of fire? Are they not called seraphs because they fly like flames upon their Master's errands. Be not you slow where angels are like flashes of lightning. If we would see any success come to the Church; and I know that is dear to us; if we would see souls converted, and I know it is the object of your daily prayer; if you would hear the cry that "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ," and I know that this is your passionate desire; if you would see crowns put upon the head of the Savior and his throne lifted high, and I know this is your great ambition; if you would see Jehovah, your Father, glorified even to the ends of the earth, then he filled with zeal. Under God, the way of the world's conversion must be by the zeal of the Church. Simon Zelotes must lead the van; the rest may follow in their places; knowledge, patience, courage,

prudence, every grace shall do exploits, but this shall he first, this shall bear the standard high. Zeal for God, zeal for his truth; this shall be in the van, and may you stand side-by-side with the most zealous in the day of conflict, that you may be there in the hour of victory.

I cannot this morning address you as I would desire, for I cannot feel my own zeal to be what I would have it be. O for the zeal of Wesley and Whitfield, the zeal of men who were always preaching or praying, men who seemed as if they knew no weariness, or shook it off as dust from off their feet! Oh, to have the zeal of apostolic times again, when the very least among you should be ready to be martyrs for Christ, if need be; and when all of you should testify of him, wherever you were called to go. Oh, for more zeal in the household, that you might seek more anxiously the conversion of your children; more zeal in the workshop, that you might communicate to your fellow-workmen the spirit which actuates and moves you. Oh, for more zeal in the Church, and Church-meetings, and prayer-meetings, that everything might be done with spirit. Above all, oh, for more zeal in the pulpit. Holy fire come down! We have the wood, we have the altar, we have the sacrifice, but we want the fire. Have you not remarked, men and brethren, how much a man may do who is clothed with zeal? Some of our brethren in the ministry, to whom we have listened, have stirred our passions, have made our blood boil after a sacred fashion, and yet their talents have been very few, and we felt while they were speaking that they made better use of one talent than some have made of ten.

Believe me, it is not the extent of your knowledge, though that is useful, it is not the extent of your talent or tact, though these have their place, it is your zeal—your zeal that shall perform God's work. May I entreat you, as members of this Church, not to let your zeal die out. What prayer meetings we have had! Shall we ever forget Park Street, those prayer meetings, when I felt compelled to let you go without a word from my lips, because the Spirit of God was so awfully present that we felt bowed to the dust, and any language of mine would have been a mere impertinence. What zeal you have had! Some of you have sought for the conversion of souls. When I look upon some of you I know you are spiritual mothers and fathers in Israel, not to ones or twos, but scores. Shall your zeal relax? We have by God's grace lived to see many of our enemies clothed with shame, we have preached the Word till that Word begins to tell, and make the solid rocks of error shake. Will you draw back, will you lose your force, will you slacken in prayer, will you refuse to receive the blessing which awaits you?

Will you take your heads from the crown, when it is ready to descend? I pray you do not so. Let us be banded together as one man; let us contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; let us pray with fervor, let us live in holiness, let us preach constantly, and preach within fire, and let us so live, that we may impress our age, and leave our footprints on the sands of time.

As for some of you who never were zealous, who are the fathers of no spiritual children;-as for some of you, whose religion gets into a very narrow compass and is good for very little when it gets there, I pray you bestir yourselves. If your religion be a lie, do not profess it; if it be a farce, do not slave yourselves to it; but if there be anything in religion, it is worth everything; it cannot sit second at the table; it must have the first place. The Christian man is to be first of all a Christian man, next to that a tradesman or what you will, but first of all a Christian man. The first thing with the believer is his Lord. Christ will be nowhere if he is not first and chief, and that religion is vain and void which does not fill the soul and take up the throne of the heart. May God give us, then, to wear the character if not the name of Simon Zelotes, and then we will wait at his footstool, and serve him after such sort as he shall help us to do, and his shall be all the praise.

But, ah! we must be converted first, and let the sinner remember that his first business is with this text-"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved:" that is, trust Jesus, for it is written, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned." God give you to trust Christ, and then to be zealous for him. Amen.



# THE GOSPEL'S POWER IN A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE.

NO. 640

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.” —  
Philippians 1:27.*

THE word “conversation” does not merely mean our talk and converse one with another, but the whole course of our life and behavior in the world. The Greek word signifies the actions and the privileges of citizenship, and we are to let our whole citizenship, our actions as citizens of the new Jerusalem, be such as becometh the gospel of Christ. Observe, dear friends, the difference between the exhortations of the legalists and those of the gospel. He who would have you perfect in the flesh, exhorts you to work that you may be saved, that you may accomplish a meritorious righteousness of your own, and so may be accepted before God. But he who is taught in the doctrines of grace, urges you to holiness for quite another reason. He believes that you are saved, since you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he speaks to as many as are saved in Jesus, and then he asks them to make their actions conformable to their position; he only seeks what he may reasonably expect to receive; “Let your conversation be such as becometh the gospel of Christ. You have been saved by it, you profess to glory in it, you desire to extend it; let then your conversation be such as becometh it.” The one, you perceive, bids you to work that you may enter heaven by your working; the other exhorts you to labor because heaven is yours as the gift of divine grace, and he would have you act as one who is made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Some persons cannot hear an exhortation without at once crying out that we are legal. Such persons will always find this Tabernacle the wrong place for them to feed in. We are delighted to preach good high doctrine, and to insist upon it that salvation is of grace alone; but we are equally

delighted to preach good high practice and to insist upon it, that that grace which does not make a man better than his neighbors, is a grace which will never take him to heaven, nor render him acceptable before God.

I have already remarked that the exhortation is given in a form which is highly reasonable. The followers of any other religion, as a rule, are conformed to their religion. No nation has ever yet risen above the character of its so-called gods. Look at the disciples of Venus, were they not sunk deep in licentiousness? Look at the worshippers of Bacchus; let their Bacchanalian revels tell how they entered into the character of their deity. The worshippers to this day of the goddess Kale — the goddess of thieves and murderers-the Thugs-enter most heartily into the spirit of the idol that they worship. We do not marvel at the crimes of the ancients when we recollect the gods whom they adored; Moloch, who delighted in the blood of little children; Jupiter, Mercury, and the like, whose actions stored in the classical dictionary, are enough to pollute the minds of youth. We marvel not that licentiousness abounded, for “like gods-like people:” “a people are never better than their religion,” it has often been said, and in most cases they are rather worse. It is strictly in accordance with nature that a man’s religion should season his conversation. Paul puts it, therefore, to you who profess to be saved by Jesus Christ, “Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.”

To get at this we must meditate for two or three minutes upon what the gospel is; then take up the points in which our conversation ought to be like to the gospel; and finally, utter a few earnest words to press upon professors of religion here, the stern necessity of letting their conversation be such as becometh the gospel of Christ.

**I.** “The GOSPEL OF CHRIST!” WHAT IS IT? We catch at the last two words, “of Christ.” Indeed, if you understand Christ you understand the gospel. Christ is the author of it; he, in the council chamber of eternity proposed to become the surety for poor fallen man; he, in the fullness of time, wrought out eternal redemption for as many as his Father had given him. He is the author of it as its architect and as its builder. We see in Christ Jesus the Alpha and the Omega of the gospel He has provided in the treasury of grace all that is necessary to make the gospel the gospel of our salvation. And as he is the author of it, so he is the matter of it. It is impossible to preach the gospel without preaching the person, the work, the offices, the character of Christ. If Christ he preached the gospel is promulgated, and if

Christ be put in the background, then there is no gospel declared. "God forbid that I should know anything among you," said the Apostle, "save Jesus Christ and him crucified," and so saying, he was carrying out his commission to preach the gospel both to Jews and to Gentiles. The sum total, the pith, the marrow-what the old puritans would have called the quintessence of the gospel is, Christ Jesus; so that when we have done preaching the gospel we may say, "Now of the things which we have spoken he is the sum," and we may point to him in the manger, to him on the cross, to him risen, to him coming in the second advent, to him reigning as prince of the kings of the earth, yea, point to him everywhere, as the sum total of the gospel.

It is also called "the gospel of Christ," because it is he who will be the finisher of it; he will put the finishing stroke to the work, as he laid the foundation stone. The believer does not begin in Christ and then seek perfection in himself. No, as we run the heavenly race, we are still looking unto Jesus. As his hand first tore away the sin which doth so easily beset us, and helped us to run the race with patience, so that same hand shall hold out the olive branch of victory, shall weave it into a chaplet of glory, and put it about our brow. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ-his property; it glorifies his person, it is sweet with the savor of his name. Throughout it bears the mark of his artistic fingers. If the heavens are the work of God's fingers, and the moon and the stars are by his ordinance, so we may say of the whole plan of salvation-the whole of it, great Jesus! is thy workmanship, and by thy ordinance it standeth fast.

But then it is "the gospel of Jesus Christ," and though hundreds of times this has been explained it will not be amiss to go over it. It is the "good-spell," the "good news" of Jesus Christ, and it is "good news" emphatically, because it clears away sin — the worst evil on earth. Better still, it sweeps away death and hell! Christ came into the world to take sin upon his shoulders and to carry it away, hurling it into the red sea of his atoning blood. Christ, the scape-goat, took the sin of his people upon his own head and bore it all away into the wilderness of forgetfulness, where, if it he searched for, it shall he found no more for ever. This is "good news," for it tells that the cancer at the vitals of humanity has been cured; that time leprosy which rose even to the very brow of manhood has been taken away; Christ has filled a better stream than the river Jordan, and now says to the sons of men, "Go, wash and be clean."

Besides removing the worst of ills, the gospel is “good news,” because it brings the best of blessings. What doth it but give life to the dead? It opens dumb lips, unstops deaf ears, and unseals blind eyes. Doth it not make earth time abode of peace? Has it not shut the doors of hell upon believers, and opened the gates of heaven to all who have learned to trust in Jesus’ name? “Good news!” why that word “good” has got a double meaning when it is applied to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Well were angels employed to go and tell it, and happy are the men who spend and are spent in the proclamation of such glad tidings of great joy. “God is reconciled!”-“Peace on earth!”-“Glory to God in the highest!” “Good-will towards men!” God is glorified in salvation, sinners are delivered from the wrath to come and hell does not receive the multitudes of men, but heaven is filled with the countless host redeemed by blood.

It is “good news,” too, because it is a thing that could not have been invented by the human intellect. It was news to angels!-they have not ceased to wonder at it yet, they still stand looking upon the mercy-seat, and desiring to know more of it. It will be news in eternity; we shall

*“Sing with rapture and surprise,  
His lovingkindness in the skies.”*

The “good news,” put simply into a few words, is just this, “that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”-” This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” So much, then, for what is the gospel?

**II.** Now I am not going to speak to those who do not welcome the gospel- I will speak to them another time; I pray God help them to believe it; but I have specially to speak to believers. The text says, we are to LET OUR CONVERSATION BE SUCH AS BECOMETH THE GOSPEL.

What sort of conversation then shall we have? In the first place the gospel is very simple; it is unadorned; no meretricious ornaments to clog time pile. It is simple — “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom;” it is grandly sublime in its simplicity. Let the Christian be such. It does not become the Christian minister to be arrayed in blue, and scarlet, and fine linen, and vestments, and robes, for these belong to Antichrist, and are described in

the book of the Revelation, as the sure marks of the whore of Babylon. It does not become the Christian man or the Christian woman to be guilty of spending hours in the adornment of his or her person. Our adornment should be "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." There should be about our manner, our speech, our dress, our whole behavior, that simplicity, which is the very soul of beauty. Those who labor to make themselves admirable in appearance, by meretricious ornaments, miss the road; beauty is its own adornment, and "she is most adorned when unadorned the most." The Christian man ought ever to be simple in all respects. I think, wherever you find him, you ought not to want a key to him. He should not be like certain books that you cannot make out without having somebody to tell you the hard words. He should be a transparent man like Nathaniel, "an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile." The man who catches the spirit of his master is, like Christ, a child-man, a man-child. You know they called him "that holy child Jesus;" so let us be, remembering that, "Except we be converted and become as little children," who are eminently simple and childlike, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

In time next place, if our conversation is such as becometh the gospel, we shall remember that the gospel is pre-eminently true. There is nothing in the gospel which is false-no admixture, nothing put in as an argumentum ad hominem to catch the popular ear; it tells the truth, the naked truth, and if men dislike it, the gospel cannot help it, but it states it. It is gold without dross; pure water without admixture. Now such should the Christian be. He should make his conversation true. The saints are men of honor, but sometimes, brethren, I think that many of us talk too much to speak nothing but the truth. I do not know how people could bring out broadsheets every morning with so much news, if it were all true; I suppose there must be a little wadding to fill it up, and some of that is very poor stuff. And people that keep on talking, talking, talking, cannot grind all meal; surely it must be, some of it, rather coarse bran. And in the conversation of a good many professing Christians, how much there is that is scandal, if not slander, uttered against other Christians. How much uncharitableness, if not wilful falsehood, is spoken by some professors; because too often a rebuke is taken up heedlessly, and repeated without any care being taken to ascertain whether it be true or not. The Christian's lips should keep truth when falsehood drops from the lips of all other men. A Christian man should never need to take an oath, because his word is as good as an oath; his "yea," should be "yea;" and his "nay, nay." It is for

him so to live and speak that he shall be in good repute in all society; if not for the suavity of his manners, certainly for the truthfulness of his utterances. Show me a man that is habitually or frequently a liar, and you show me a man who will have his portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. I do not care to what denomination of Christians he may belong, if a man speaks the thing that is not, I am sure he is none of Christ's; and it is very sad to know that there are some in all fellowships who have this great and grievous fault, that you cannot trust them in what they say. God deliver us from that! Let our conversation be such as becometh the gospel of Christ, and then it will be invariably truthful; or, if there be error in it, it will always be through misadventure, and never from purpose or from carelessness.

In the next place, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a very fearless gospel. It is the very reverse of that pretty thing called "modern charity." The last created devil is "modern charity." "Modern charity" goes cap in hand round to us all, amid it says "You are all right, every one of you. Do not quarrel any longer; Sectarianism is a horrid thing, down with it! down with it!" and so it tries to induce all sorts of persons to withhold a part of what they believe, to silence the testimony of all Christians upon points wherein they differ. I believe that that thing called Sectarianism now-a-days is none other than true honesty. Be a Sectarian, my brother, be profoundly a Sectarian. I mean by that, hold everything which you see to be in God's Word with a tighter grasp, and do not give up even the little pieces of truth. At the same time, let that Sectarianism which makes you hate another man because he does not see with you-let that be far from you! but never consent to that unholy league and covenant which seems to be rife throughout our country, which would put a padlock on the mouth of every man and send us all about as if we were dumb: which says to me, "You must not speak against the errors of such a Church," and to another, "You must not reply." We cannot but speak! If we did not, the stones in the street might cry out against us. That kind of charity is unknown to the gospel. Now hear the Word of God! "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not"-What? "shall get to heaven some other way?"-"shall be damned;" that is the gospel. You perceive how boldly it launches out its censure. It does not pretend, "you may reject me and go by another road, and at last get safely to your journey's end!" No, no, no; you "shall be damned" it says. Do you not perceive how Christ puts it? Some teachers come into the world and say to all others, "Yes,

gentlemen, by your leave, you are all right, I have a point or two that you have not taught, just make room for me; I will not turn you out; I can stand in the same temple as yourself." But hear what Christ says:—"All that ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them." Hear what his servant Paul says, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you,"-what then? "Let him be excused for his mistake?" No; but, "Let him be accursed." Now, this is strong language, but mark you, this is just how the Christian ought to live. As the gospel is very fearless in what it has to say, so let the Christian always be. It strikes me that a "living" which becomes the gospel of Christ, is always a bold and fearless kind of living. Some people go crawling through the world as if they asked some great man's leave to live. They do not know their own minds; they take their words out of their mouths and look at them, and ask a friend or two's opinion. "What do you think of these words?" and when these friends censure them they put them in again and will not say them. Like jelly-fish, they have no backbone. Now God has made men upright, and it is a noble thing for a man to stand erect on his own feet; and it is a nobler thing still for a man to say that in Christ Jesus he has received that freedom which is freedom indeed, and therefore he will not be the slave of any man. "O God," says David, "I am thy servant, for thou hast loosed my bonds." Happy is he whose bonds are loosed! Let your eye be like that of an eagle, yea, let it be brighter still; let it never be dimmed by the eye of any other man. Let your heart be like that of the lion, fearless, save of yourself: — "Careless, myself a dying man,

Of dying men's esteem," — I must live as in the sight of God, as I believe I should live, and then let man say his best or say his worst, and it shall be no more than the chirping of the grasshopper, when the sun goeth down. "Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, or the son of man that is but a worm?" Quit yourselves like men! Be strong! Fear not! for only so will your conversation be such as becometh the gospel of Christ.

But again, the gospel of Christ is very gentle. Hear it speak! "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Here is its spirit in its founder:—"He will not quench the smoking flax, a bruised reed he will not break." Moreover, bad temper, snapping off of people's heads, making men offenders for a word, all this is quite contrary to the gospel. There are some people who seem to have been suckled upon

vinegar, and whose entire aspect far better suits Sinai than Zion; you might think that they had always come to the mount that might he touched, which burneth with fire, for they seem themselves to burn with fire. I may say to them, that the best of them is sharper than a thorn hedge. Now, dear friends, let it never be so with us. Be firm, be bold, be fearless; but be cautious. If you have a lion's heart, have a lady's hand; let there be such a gentleness about your carriage that the little children may not be afraid to come to you, and that the publican and harlot may not be driven away by your hostility, but invited to goodness by the gentleness of your words and acts.

Again, the gospel of Christ is very loving. It is the speech of the God of love to a host and fallen race. It tells us that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It proclaims in every word the grace of him "who loved us and gave himself for us." "Greater love bath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This same mind which was in Christ Jesus should dwell richly in us. His last command to his disciples was, "Love one another." He that loveth is born of God, while without this grace,

whatever we may think of ourselves, or others may think of us, we are really, in God's sight, nothing better than sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. Is not this an age in which we shall do well to direct our attention to the flower of paradise? The atmosphere of the Church should foster this heavenly plant to the highest perfection. The world ought to point to us amid say, "See how these Christians love one another. Not in word only, but in deed and in truth." I care not for that hove which calls me a dearly beloved brother, and then if I happen to differ in sentiment and practice, treats me as a schismatic, denies me the rights of the brotherhood, and if I do not choose to subscribe to an arbitrarily imposed contribution to its funds, seizes my goods and sells them in the name of the law, order, and Church of Christ. From all such sham love good Lord deliver us. But oh! for more real hearty union and love to all the saints-for more of that realisation of the fact that we are one in Christ Jesus. At the same time pray for more love to all men. We ought to love all our hearers, and the gospel is to be preached by us to every creature. I hate sin everywhere, but I love and wish to love yet more and more every day, the souls of the worst and vilest of men. Yes, the gospel speaks of love, and I must breathe it forth too, in every act and deed. If our Lord was love incarnate, and we



are his disciples, “let all take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus and learned of him.”

The gospel of Christ, again, is the gospel of mercy, and if any man would act as becometh the gospel, he must be a man of mercy. Do I see him? He is praying. He has been to the sacramental table, and he has been drinking time wine which betokens the Savior’s blood- what a good man he is! See him on Monday — he has got his hand on his brother’s throat, with, — “Pay me that thou owest!” Is that such as becometh the gospel of Christ? There he sits; he will give his subscription to a charity, but he will grind down the needle-woman, he will fatten on liner blood and bones; he will take a grasp if he can of the poor, and sell them, and devour them as though they were bread, and yet, at the same time, “for a pretense he will make long prayers.” Is this such as becometh the gospel of Christ? I trow not. The gospel of Christ is mercy, generosity, liberality. It receiveth the beggar and heareth his cry; it picketh up even the vile and undeserving, and scattereth lavish blessings upon them, and it filleth the bosom of the naked and of the hungry with good things. Let your conversation be such as becometh the gospel of Christ. Your miserly people, your stingy people, have not a conversation such as becometh the gospel of Christ. There might be plenty of money in God’s treasury, for God’s Church and for God’s poor, if there were not some who seem to live only to amass, and to hoard; their life is diametrically opposed to the whole current and spirit of the gospel of Christ Jesus. Forgive all who offend you, help all as far as you are able to do it, live a life of unselfishness; be prepared, as much as lieth in you, to do good unto all men, and especially to the household of faith, and so shall our conversation be such as becometh the gospel of Christ.

I must not, however, omit to say that the gospel of Christ is holy. You cannot find it excusing sin. It pardons it, but not without an atonement so dreadful, that sin never seems so exceeding sinful as in the act of mercy which puts it away. “Holy! Holy! Holy!” is the cry of the gospel, and such is the cry of cherubim and seraphim. Now, if our conversation is to be like the gospel, we must be holy too. There are some things which the Christian must not even name, much less indulge in. The grosser vices are to him things to be hidden behind the curtain, and totally unknown. The amusements and pleasures of the world, so far as they may be innocent, are his, as they are other men’s; but wherein they become sinful or doubtful, he discards them with disgust, for he has secret sources of joy, and needs not

therefore to go and drink of that muddy river of which thirsty worldlings are so fond. He seeks to be holy, as Christ is holy; and there is no conversation which becometh the gospel of Christ except that.

**III.** Dear friends, I might thus continue, for the subject is a very wide one, and I only stop because, unhappily for me, though perhaps happily for your patience, my time has gone. Having just indicated what Christian life ought to be, I must in a few words plead within you, that by the power of God's Holy Spirit, you will seek to make your lives such. I could mention many reasons—I will only give you one or two. The first is, if you do not live like this, you will make your fellow-members, who are innocent of your sin, to suffer. This ought to be a very cogent motive. If a Christian man could dishonor himself, and bear the blame alone, why he might put up with it, but you cannot do it. I say, sir, if you are seen intoxicated, or if you are known to fall into some sin of the flesh, you will make the life of every poor girl in the Church harder than it is, and every poor young man who has to put up with persecution will feel that you have put a sting into the arrows of the wicked, which could not otherwise have been there. You sin against the congregation of God's people. I know there are some of you here that have to suffer a good deal for Christ's sake. The jeer rings in your ear from morning to night, and you learn to put up with it manfully; but it is very hard when they can say to you, "Look at So-and-so—he is a Church member, see what he did—you are all a parcel of hypocrites together." Now, my dear friends, you know that is not true; you know that there are many in our churches of whom the world is not worthy—the excellent, the devout, the Christ-like; do not sin, then, for their sakes, lest you make them to be grieved and sore vexed.

Again, do not you see how you make your Lord to suffer, for they do not lay your sins at your door merely, but they say that springs from your religion. If they would impute the folly to the fool I might not care, but they impute it to the wisdom which must have made that fool wise, if he could have learned. They will lay it to my door — that does not matter much — I have long lost my character; but I cannot bear it should be laid at Christ's door—at the door of the gospel. When I said just now that I had lost my character, I meant just this, that the world loathes me, and I would not have it do otherwise, so let it, I say, there is no love lost between us. If the world bates Christ's minister, he can only say he desires that he may never inherit the curse of those who love the world, "in whom the love of the Father is not." Yet it has ever been the lot of the true Christian minister

to be the butt of slander, and, nevertheless, to glory in the cross with all its shame. But I know, dear friends, you would not, any of you, wish that I should bear the reproach of your sins, and yet I have to do it very often-not very often for many, but for some. There are those, of whom I might tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; and some others whom we would pluck out of the fire, hating the garment spotted with the flesh, but they bring sad dishonor upon us, upon the ministry, upon the gospel, and upon Christ himself. You do not want to do that, at least, I hope you do not; then let your conversation be such as becometh the gospel of Christ.

And then, remember, dear friends, unless your conversation is such, you will pull down all the witness that you have ever borne for Christ. How can your Sunday-school children believe what you tell them, when they see your actions contradict your teaching? How can your own children at home believe in your religion, when they see the godlessness of your life? The men at the factory will not believe in your going to prayer-meeting, when they see you walking inconsistently among them. Oh! the great thing the Church wants is more holiness. The worst enemies of the Church are not the infidels-really one does not know who the infidels are, now-a-days; they are so small a fry, and so few of them, that one would have to hunt to find them out; but the worst enemies of the Church are the hypocrites, the formalists the mere professors, the inconsistent walkers. You, if there be any such here-you pull down the walls of Jerusalem, you open the gates to her foes, and, as much as lieth in you, you serve the devil. May God forgive you! May Christ forgive you! May you be washed from this atrocious sin! May you be brought humbly to the foot of the cross, to accept mercy, which, until now, you have rejected!

It is shocking to think how persons dare to remain members of Christian churches, and even to enter the pulpit, when they are conscious that their private life is foul. Oh, how can they do it? How is it that their hearts have grown so hard? What! hath the devil bewitched them? Hath he turned them away from being men, and made them as devilish as himself, that they should dare to pray in public, and to sit at the sacramental table, and to administer ordinances, while their hands are foul, and their hearts unclean, and their lives are full of sin? I charge you, if there are any of you whose lives are not consistent, give up your profession, or else make your lives what they should be. May the eternal Spirit, who still winnows his Church, blow away the chaff, and leave only the good golden wheat upon the

floor! And if you know yourselves to be living in any sin, may God help you to mourn over it, to loathe it, to go to Christ about it to-night; to take hold of him, to wash his feet with your tears, to repent unfeignedly, and then to begin anew in his strength, a life which shall be such as becometh the gospel.

I think I linear some ungodly person here saying, "Well I do not make any profession, I am all right." Now, listen, dear friend, listen! I have got a word for you. A man is brought up before the magistrates, and he says, "Well, I never made any profession of being an honest man." "Oh," says the magistrate, "there is six months for you then:" you see he is a villain outright. And you that say "Oh, I never made any profession," why, by putting yourselves on that ground, you place yourselves among the condemned ones. But some people make a boast of it. "I never made a profession." Never made a profession of doing your duty to your maker? Never made a profession of being obedient to the God in whose hands your breath is? Never made a profession of being obedient to the gospel? Why, it will be very short work with you, when you come to be tried at the last; there will need to be no witnesses, for you never made a profession, you never pretended to be right. What would you think of a man who said, "Well, I never made a profession of speaking the truth." "Well," says another, "I never made a profession of being chaste." Why, you would say, "Let us get out of this fellow's company, because, evidently nothing but evil can come from him, for he is not good enough even to make a profession!" Now I put that strongly that you may recollect it; will you go home and just meditate on this—"I never made a profession of being saved. I never made a profession of repenting of my sins, and therefore I am every day making a profession of being God's enemy, of being impenitent, of being unbelieving; and when the devil comes to look for his own he will know me, for I make a profession of being one of his, by not making a profession of being one of Christ's." The fact is, I pray God to bring us all here, first to be Christ's and then to make a profession of it. Oh that your heart might be washed in Jesus' blood, and then, having given it to Christ, give it to Christ's people. The Lord bless these words of mimic for Jesus' sake. Amen.

# CONFESSION OF SIN ILLUSTRATED BY THE CASES OF DR. PRITCHARD AND CONSTANCE KENT.

NO. 641

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 23RD, 1805,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” — Psalm 32:5.

DAVID’S grief for sin was long and terrible. Its effects were visible upon his outward frame; “his bones waxed old;” “his moisture was turned into the drought of summer.” No remedy could he find, until he made a full confession before the throne of the heavenly grace. He tells us, that for a time he kept silence, and then his heart became more and more filled with grief: like some mountain tarn whose outlet is blocked up, his soul was swollen with torrents of sorrow. He dreaded to confront his sin. He fashioned excuses; he endeavored to divert his thoughts, by giving his mind to the cares of his kingdom or the pleasures of his court, but it was all to no purpose; the rankling arrow made the wound bleed anew, and made the gash more wide and deep every day. Like a festering sore his anguish gathered and increased, and as he would not use the lancet of confession, his spirits became more and more full of torment, and there was no rest in his bones because of sin. At last it came to this, that he must return unto his God in humble penitence, or he must die outright; so he hastened to the mercy-seat, and there unrolled the volume of his iniquities before the eye of the all-seeing One, acknowledging all the evil of his ways in language such

as you read in the fifty-first and other penitential Psalms. Having done this, a work so simple and yet so difficult to pride, he received at once the token of divine forgiveness; the bones which had been broken were made to rejoice, and he came forth from his closet to sing the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.

See, dear friends, the value of a truthful grace-wrought confession of sin; it is to be prized above all price, for he that confesseth his sin and forsaketh it, shall find mercy. Now, it is a well known fact, that when God is pleased to bestow upon men any choice gift, Satan, who is the god of counterfeits, is sure very soon to produce a base imitation, true in appearance, but worthless in reality: his object is deception, and full often he succeeds. How many there are who have made a worthless confession, and yet are relying upon it as though it were a work of grace; they have come before God as a matter of form, and have said, “Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners;” and having so done, imagine that they have received the divine absolution, when alas! alas! it is easy to be deceived, and difficult to cultivate within one’s heart that genuine repentance, which is the work of God the Holy Ghost.

May God grant us his gracious assistance while we describe two widely different sorts of confession. which have been very vividly brought before us during the past week; and then we will have a few words upon the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy which is vested in God, who gives forgiveness to those whose confession is sincere.

## **I.** Let me set before you TWO SORTS OF CONFESSION.

At this present moment, unhappily, two persons are lying under sentence of death, for murders of the most atrocious character. Without wishing to say a single word with regard to the state of soul of either of these persons—for into that it is no business of mine to pry—it seems to me that the published reports of their cases, may very properly furnish us with types of two sorts of persons. It is remarkable that two such cases as those of Dr. Pritchard and Constance Kent should be before the public eye at the same moment and that the points of contrast in their confession should be so exceedingly clear. I cannot but hope and pray that we may gather some few lessons of warning from crimes which have no doubt exercised a great influence for evil upon the masses of our country.

The confession which has been made by Dr. PRITCHARD, maybe taken as a specimen of those which are lull often made by impenitent sinners, which can never be regarded as acceptable before the throne of the Most High. Here is a man who is accused of the atrocious crime of murdering his wife and his mother-in-law, and when he answers to the indictment, we are not astonished to hear him plead, "Not Guilty!" I am far from being severe upon him for so pleading, but viewing him as a type, I would remind you that thousands of those who call themselves miserable sinners" in our public services, if they were called to plead before the bar of God, would have the effrontery to say "Not Guilty." They might not use the words, very probably they would use terms having the opposite meaning, but their heart-plea would be, "not guilty." If they had the law of God explained to the m and they were questioned upon each commandment, "Have you broken this? Have you broken that?" though ready enough to confess in the gross that they have sinned, when it came to details they would be for denying all. We have heard of a woman who readily allowed that she was a sinner "O yes, sir, we are all sinners. Just so, sir." But when the visitor sat down and opened the book, and pointing to the commandment, said, "Have you ever had any other God save the Lord?" She did not know that she ever had. "Had she ever taken God's name in vain?" "O dear no, sir, I never did anything so wicked." Each precept was explained, and she very positively claimed that she had not broken it. She had not violated the Sabbath; she had not killed anybody; she had not committed adultery; she had not borne false witness, or coveted anything; she was altogether, in detail, innocent, though in the gross she was quite willing to say as other people, "Oh, yes! I am a sinner, of course, sir, we are all sinners!" which, being interpreted, means, "I am ready to say anything you like to put into my mouth, but I do not believe a syllable of it." The inward speech of the unconverted man is, "I am not guilty." Ask the unhumiliated transgressor, "Art thou worthy of God's wrath?" and his proud heart replies, "I am not." "Art thou worthy to be cast away for ever from God's presence on account of sin?" and the unbroken, uncontrite soul replies. "I am not. I am no thief, nor adulterer, nor extortioner; I have not sinned as yon publican has done. I thank God that I am not as other men are." Man pleads Not Guilty, and yet all the while within his heart, so proud and boastful, there may readily he discerned abundant evidence of abounding sin. The leprosy is white upon his unclean brow, and yet the man claims to be sound and whole. If there were no other evidence against us, the very pride which boasts of

innocence would be sufficient to convict us of sin, and will be so when we are taught right reason by the Holy Spirit.

The guilty man whose case we are now looking upon as an illustration, endeavored, as a means of defense for himself, to involve another in the dreadful guilt and punishment of his atrocious sin. There were very distinct signs that he would have been perfectly satisfied if the woman who had ministered to his sinful pleasures had been accused and condemned of the crime of which he alone was guilty. Certainly this is the case with the great mass of those who are compelled to acknowledge their sins. Our first parent could not deny that he had taken of the forbidden fruit, but he laid the blame upon Eve: "The woman whom thou gayest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." Ah Adam! where is thy manliness, where thy love to thy spouse, that thou wouldest involve in the ruin her who was bone of thy bone so as to escape thyself? And she! she will not take the blame for a moment, but it is the serpent; she casts all the sin on him. In this first ease of sin, the attempt was less atrocious than in that of the prisoner before us, because there was real guilt both in the woman and in the serpent, while it does not appear that the servant girl in Pritchard's family had any share in the poisoning. However, the human heart is such, that if we could really throw all the shame and blame of sin upon another who was perfectly innocent, there would be a strong temptation to do so if we might by such means be considered innocent. Nay, let me show that Adam virtually did that, for he said "The woman whom thou gayest me," thus virtually laying the blame of his rebellious deed upon God himself. And God, what hand had he in Adam's eating of the fruit of the accursed tree? It was an act of Adam's free will, he did as he pleased concerning it, and the most holy God could in no sense be made partaker of his transgression. Yet, think of it! He would sooner that the great God, who is hymned of angels as the thrice Holy One, should bear the fault of his iniquity than he would bear it himself. Such are we naturally. We may bend the knee and say we are miserable sinners, but unless the grace of God has taught us to make true confession we are always for shifting the burden to some other shoulder, and making it out that after all, though nominally miserable sinners, we are not so bad as a great many other people, and have a deal saddled upon us which really is no fault of ours, but belongs to providence, to fate, to our fellow men, to the devil, to the weather, and I know not what besides.



The convicted criminal who stands before us in our picture made no confession whatever until the case was proved and sentence pronounced. The case was clear enough, but he did his best to make it difficult; had he been completely free from the crime, his bearing and tone could have been scarcely more confident when asserting his innocence. I admit that it was very natural that he should not aid to convict himself, it is because it is so natural that the man serves so admirably as a representative of human nature when it makes its impenitent confessions. When it could not avail the wretch to withhold the truth, when facts were brought out so clear, when the jury had decided, when the judge had pronounced sentence, then, and not till then, he yielded to tears and entreaties, and proffered a confession, such as it was. So is it ever with unregenerate humanity; though cognizant of sin, we only acknowledge before the Lord that which is too glaring to be denied. Sin may be held up before the eyes of the man who is guilty of it, and often he will disown his own offspring, or assert that it is not what God's Word declares it to be. Holy Scripture accuses us of a thousand sins which we practically claim to be innocent of, for we flatter ourselves that the Bible puts too harsh a construction upon our actions, and that we are not what it declares us to be. When our fellow-men concur in censuring our fault we are compelled to blush, but of what value is a repentance which owes its existence to the overwhelming testimony of our fellow offenders against us. This forced work is far removed from the free and ready acknowledgments of a man whose heart is touched by divine grace and melted by the love of Jesus. When men are upon their dying beds, when the ghosts of their iniquities haunt them, when the red hand of guilt draws the curtain, when they can almost hear the sentence of the last judgment. then they will make a confession, but may we not fear that it is of little value, since it is wrung and extorted from them by fear of hell and horror of the wrath to come. True repentance wrought in us by the Holy Ghost drops as freely as honey droppeth from the comb, but merely natural confessions are like the worst of the wine squeezed by main force from the dregs. O dear friends, God deliver you from ungracious confessions of sin, and enable you sincerely to repent at the foot of Jesus' cross!

When the confession came, in the case before us, it was very partial, He had killed one, but he professed himself guiltless of the other's death. Villain as he was, on his own shewing, he could go the length of owning half his crime, but then he started back and acted the liar. No, she died by

accident, and he, to avoid being charged unjustly-innocent creature as he was-had put the poison in the bottle afterwards. He had the wickedness to feign a wonder that his tale was not believed, and likened those who doubted him to those who would not believe the Lord of glory. Now, the confessions of unregenerate men are precisely of this sort. They will go the length of owning, if they have been drinking, or if they have broken the laws of the state, "yes, we have offended here," but the great mass of sins against God are not confessed, nor allowed to be sins at all. Men will often lay a stress upon sins of which they are not conspicuously guilty, and omit those which are the most glaring. What unrenewed man thinks it a sin to forget God, to forsake the Creator's fountain of living waters for the cisterns of the creature, or to live without God in the world? And yet, these are the most crying of all iniquities. To rob God of his glory, to despise his Son, to disbelieve the gospel, to live for self, to be self-righteous-all these are heinous evils, but what carnal man owns to them as such?

Covetousness! again, who ever confesses that? Thousands are guilty of it, but few will own it even in private before the Lord. No confession will be acceptable before God, unless you are willing to make a clean breast of the whole of your evil ways, words and thoughts, before the searcher of hearts. I do not wonder if you should fail to tell to others your offenses; it were not meet you should do so except wherein you have offended them and may make retribution by the confession; but before God you must open all, you must roll away the stone from the mouth of that sepulcher, even though your iniquity, like Lazarus, should stink. There must be no mincing the matter, things must be called by their right names; you must be willing to feel the horrible sinfulness of sin, amid as far as you can, you must descend to the very bottom of its terrible guiltiness, and acknowledge its blackness, its heinousness, its devilry, its abomination. No confession will be acceptable before God, if you knowingly and wilfully gloss over any sin; if you make any exception, or are partial with respect to any form of iniquity. That confession which hides some sins and only confesses certain others stops one leak in the soul and opens another.

Nor ought it to be forgotten, that when the criminal had confessed his sin, yet still in the last confession-which we may suppose to have been true, there are words of extenuation, and nothing to indicate any deep and suitable sensibility of his great enormity. He hints at reasons why he was scarcely accountable-a sort of madness and the influence of strong drink must be execrated for the crime, and not the man himself. O God, thou

knowest how often in our natural confessions, before thy grace met with us, we made wretched and mean excuses for ourselves! We said that a strong temptation overcame us; it was an unguarded moment; it was our constitution amid our besetting sins; it was our friend who led us astray; it was God's providence which tried us; it was anything rather than ourselves—we were to blame, no doubt, but still there were extenuating circumstances. Beloved friends! a man can never make a true confession till he feels that sin is his own sin, and is willing to confess it as such; he must cease to apologize any longer, and must just stand forth before the Lord, and cry, "I have sinned, willfully and infamously, and here, standing in thy presence, I acknowledge it: but if a word of apology could save my soul, I dare not utter it, for I should again be guilty of a lie." May this teach us to seek out rather the aggravations of our sin than fancied extenuations of it. Try to see the worst of thy case, sinner, more than to gloss it or gild it over and make it seem better than it is.

All this, remember, was committed by this miserable murderer, who is so soon to appear before his God, not through ignorance, but in spite of a clear consciousness of the wrong of his deed. Had he been some person of a low mental organization, or of neglected intellect, there might be some plea. If, for instance, he had never been able to read, and had received his only education amid thieves and vagabonds, there might have been some excuse, and we might have said, "It is the sin of the community which fails to provide moral and religious instruction for the people;" but here is a man who knows better, who, I suppose, had listened to thousands of sermons, had a knowledge of the Bible, had pretended to pray, was well taught as to the matter of right and wrong, and yet still, in defiance of all this, he sins, and to make the matter worse, shows no signs of softening of heart, no tenderness, no melting, nothing of deep regret, and shame, and contrition, and humbleness of heart, but is, apparently (I say no more) as obdurate in confessing his guilt as when he was denying it. Ah! but there are too many who make confession, having no broken hearts, no streaming eyes, no flowing tears, no humbled spirits. Know ye this, that ten thousand confessions, if they are made by hardened hearts, if they do not spring from really contrite spirits shall be only additions to your guilt as they are mockeries before the Most High. Let these suffice as remarks upon unacceptable confession. Oh Lord, let thy Holy Spirit give to the guilty one, of whom we have been speaking, and to us all that broken and contrite heart, which thou wilt accept through Jesus Christ!

The second case must now come before us, and here again I do not desire to speak anything about the state of heart of CONSTANCE KENT, I only speak of her outward act, and only of that as a symbol of true confession. Here is one avowedly guilty of a most atrocious murder, a very great and terrible crime; but when she appears in court she is brought there upon her own confession; her life was in no danger from the witness of other people. She surrendered herself voluntarily, and when she stood before the judge, she pleaded guilty. No doubt her anxious friends had suggested to her the desirableness of pleading "Not guilty," hoping to save her life by failure in the evidence, or plea of insanity, or some other legal method of saving criminals from the gallows. Mark, however, how distinctly she says "Guilty;" and though the question is repeated and space is given her to retract, her reply is still the one self-condemning word "GUILTY!" Even so before the Lord, whenever we come to confess we must approach him with this cry, Guilty, Guilty! "Lord, I cannot say anything else. If hell be my eternal portion for it, I dare say no other. The stones in the streets would cry out against me if I denied my guilt. When my memory shows me the record of my days, its truthful witness is that I have broken thy law; and when my conscience looks at the way in which I have transgressed, it cannot say anything but this, 'Thou hast wilfully broken God's law and thou deservest his wrath.'" Now sinner, thou shalt never be at peace with God until thou art willing unreservedly to plead "Guilty." That self-righteous spirit of thine must he cast out as though it were the very devil, for it is next akin to the devil, and is quite as mischievous, and thou must he brought down humbly to lie at the foot of Jehovah's throne and confess that thou dost richly deserve his wrath, for thou hast defied his righteous law and sinned against him with a high hand. You must plead "Guilty," or remain guilty for ever.

You shall never find pardon through Jesus Christ till you are willing, truly and really, to own yourself a sinner.

Constance Kent was anxious to free all others from the blame of her sin. Her counsel says, in open court, "Solemnly, in the presence of Almighty God, as a person who values her own soul, she wishes me to say that the guilt is her own alone; and that her father and others, who have so long suffered most unjust and cruel suspicions, are wholly and absolutely innocent." This is well spoken. I know nothing of this young woman's heart, but using her as an illustration rather than an example, we are safe in saying that it is a very blessed sign of true repentance when the sinner cries

out with David, "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." There will be in a gracious penitent no attempt to lay the blame upon the tempter, or upon providence; no dwelling upon circumstances, the suddenness of the temptation, or the hastiness of one's temper. "Oh God," says the sinner, "I have sinned myself; I have nothing in the world that is so trimly my own as my own sin. For this my sin, I alone am accountable, and I feel it, amid I cannot, I dare not impeach any one else with being guilty of my sin. I must stand in my own person before thee, O God, even if that involves my eternal ruin." it will never do for you to lay the blame on your mothers and fathers because they did not teach you better, upon the minister for not being earnest enough, or upon your master for telling you to do wrong. It is true that we may be partakers of your sins in a measure, but if you be sincerely penitent, the guilt which will strike you will not be another man's guilt, nor another man's share in your sin, but your own guilt. A sinner has not been brought truly before the Lord in humble contrition, unless his cry is "Lord! I have sinned, I have sinned so as to be guilty myself, in my own person. Have mercy upon me!"

The unhappy young woman now condemned to die needed no witness to come forward to prove her guilt and ensure her conviction. No one saw the deed; it was done so secretly that the most expert detectives were not able to find a satisfactory clue to the mystery. There may be collateral evidence to support her confession; it may, or it may not be true that her conviction would now have been certain had her confession been retracted; but she did not need that, for without any voice of man to witness she witnessed against herself. It will never suffice for us merely to confess to the Lord what other people have seen, and to feel guilty because we know that the case is reported in the neighborhood. Many people who have fallen into sin, have felt very penitent because they knew they should damage their names, or lose their situations; but to have your private sin brought before you by conscience, and voluntarily without any pressure but the burden of sin itself and the work of the Holy Spirit, to come before God and say, "Lord, thou knowest in this matter I have offended, and though none saw me except thine eye and mine; yet thine eye might well flash with anger at me, while mine shall be wet with many a tear of penitence on account of it:" that is what you need, Sinner, thou must come before God now and let out thine heart without any external pressure. Spontaneously must thy soul

flow out, poured out like water before the Lord, or thou must not hope that he will give thee pardon.

She confessed all. It was a solemn moment when the judge said, "I must repeat to you, that you are charged with having wilfully, intentionally, and with malice killed and murdered your brother. Are you guilty or not guilty?" Yes, she was guilty, just as the judge had put it.

She did not object to those words which made the case come out so black. The willfulness?-yes, she acknowledged that. The intention, the malice? — yes, all that. The killing, the murdering-was it just murder? — was it nothing less? No, nothing else. Not a word of extenuation. She acknowledges all, just as the judge puts it. She is guilty in very deed of the whole charge. Sinner, will you confess sin as God puts it? Many will confess sin after their own fashion, but will you confess it as God puts it? Are you brought to see sin as God sees it? as far as mortal eye could bear that dreadful sight, and do you confess now just what God lays to your door, that you have been his enemy, a traitor, full of evil, covered with iniquity? Will you confess that you have crucified his dear Son, and have in all ways deserved his hottest wrath and displeasure-will you plead guilty to that? If not, you shall have no pardon; but if you will do this, he is merciful and just to forgive you your sins through Jesus the great atoning sacrifice.

She had not, nor had her counsel for her, a single word to say by way of apology; in fact, at her request, one supposed excuse was utterly discarded: "She wishes me to say that she was not driven to this act, as has been asserted, by unkind treatment at home, as she met with nothing there but tender and forbearing love." Her counsel might have said she was very young-it was hoped that her youth might plead for her. Being young, she might be readily led astray by an evil passion- might not that excuse linger? It was long ago, and her confession was her own; she had brought herself there into that dock-might not this be a reason for mercy? Nothing of the kind. The judge might think so if he pleased, but there was nothing said for her about that, nor did she desire that it should be suggested. She might secretly hope, but her confession was so thorough, that there was not a single word to sully its clear stream. So, sinner, if you come before God, you must not say, "Lord, I am to be excused because of my position-I was in poverty, and I was tempted to steal; or, I had been in bad company, and so I learned to blaspheme; or, I had a hard master, and so I was driven to sin to find some pleasure there." No; if you are really penitent, you will find

no reason whatever why you should have sinned, except the evil of your own heart, and that you will plead as an aggravation, not as an excuse. "Guilty! guilty! guilty! am I, O God, before thy face; I offer no excuse, no extenuation. Thou must deal with me upon pure mercy, if thou dost save me, for justice can only award me my well-deserved doom."

Notice that when she was asked whether she had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon her, there was still a solemn silence. Was there no reason to be given why the dreadful sentence of being hanged by the neck until dead, should not be passed upon a young and weeping girl? She did not so much as hint at one. I remember well the time when I thought there was no reason why the flames of hell should not consume me, and why the crushing weight of God's wrath should not roll over me for ever and for ever. Methinks every sinner who has really come to Christ, has been made to feel that however angry God may be with sin, time is not one whit too angry. Until we know the power of divine grace, we read in the Bible concerning eternal punishment, and we think it is too heavy and too hard, and we are apt to kick against it, and find out some heretic or other who teaches us another doctrine; but when the soul is really quickened by divine grace, and made to feel the weight of sin, it thinks the bottomless pit none too deep, and thine punishment of hell none too severe for sin such as it has committed. This is not the emotion of a mind rendered morbid by sickness, but these are the genuine workings of God the Holy Ghost in the soul, bringing the man to stand guilty before the Lord, with his mouth closed, not able to say a word against the sentence of divine justice. May God bring such there who have never been there yet!

In the confession, as we read the story, there was much tenderness. I do not wonder that the judge exhibited deep emotion, who could help it? Remember, I am not pretending to know her heart, I am only judging the externals; as far as thine externals went there seemed to be a great brokenness of spirit. She appeared really to know what guilt meant, and to stand there with this resolve upon her soul, that though she could not make any atonement for her crime, she would acknowledge it honestly, and accordingly she confessed it as one who felt within her own soul the terrible weight of her guilt. This is the manner in which we must stand before God if we would find mercy. It is all very well for us to use fine language, but words alone are worthless. Those words which come fresh from your lips, dictated by your own heart, because the Holy Ghost is there, will suffice if the heart be in them. It is to the contrite that the

promise is given. Look to Jesus for contrition, for without it there is no pardon.

**II.** Thus we have tried, as far as we could, to bring out the distinctions which pertain to confessions, and now let us have a word or two upon THE EXERCISE OF THE PREROGATIVE OF MERCY ON GOD'S PART.

"Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." In every case where there is a genuine, gracious confession, mercy is freely given. There is a notion abroad, that confession deserves mercy. We read in the papers such remarks as these, "expiating sin by confession," or, "made such atonement as he could by confessing his sin." Confession makes no atonement in any shape whatever. There is no one single word in that law which I read to you this morning, in the twentieth of Exodus, about the possibility of taking away sin by mere confession. Justice has but one rule, and that is, sin must be punished. If the sinner violates law, law in the case of man may remit the penalty, but in the case of God never. The attributes of God are not like the qualities of man, they never come into collision with one another, nor do they abridge the sphere of each other. The justice of God is as awful and all-reaching as if line had not a grain of mercy, while the mercy of God is as unrestrained and Almighty as if line were utterly unjust. The reason why sin can be forgiven in the case of a penitent sinner is, because for that sinner Jesus Christ has borne the full weight of all the wrath which his sin deserves. The fire-cloud of Jehovah's wrath was waiting for the sinner-the sinner must receive the whole of its dread discharge; but for every sinner that repenteth and believeth in him Christ stood beneath that terrible cloud, and all the lightning was directed on him. He suffered as incarnate God, all the chastisement which was due to his people. The grief of our Savior we can never tell: the woes of Gethsemane and Gabbatha and Golgotha are not to be expressed, but they were accepted by God in the stead of all the suffering and grief which the law most righteously claimed on every law-breaker. And now, through what Christ Jesus has done, the eternal mercy of God comes streaming forth in perfect consistency with justice. Mercy provided the great substitute, and now mercy with loving heart calls upon sinners repenting and believing, and assures them that all sin is put away through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Let every sinner know, then, that although his repentance does not deserve mercy, the God of love has been pleased to promise free pardon to all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, because Christ deserves it. Pardon is given to penitent sinners as a matter



of justice, as well as mercy, because of the throes, and grief, and agonies of the Divine Redeemer.

How consistent it is with the nature of things that penitent sinners, and penitent sinners only should obtain mercy through Jesus Christ! When you read the story of the man who made no confession till it was forced out of him, although you can respond to his wish, "Fellow creatures, pray for me," you cannot feel much sympathy, if any, with him. His conduct seems to harden one's heart against him, not merely because of his guilt, but because of the lie of his confession. But, when you read the other story, although it contains no request to pray, you find you do not want one for your heart cries at once, "Father forgive her;" and you think within yourself, "If the prerogative of mercy can be exercised in this case, let it be." If it were put to a show of hands of all our country whether the law should be executed on Constance Kent, I think we should all say "Let the penitent sinner live." Great was her offense, and no excuse is to be offered for her, as she offers none for herself. It was a great and dreadful crime, which must be a blight upon her all her days, yet, let her be spared for she has confessed most fully-not on the ground of justice, but on the ground that this seems to be a case in which, if the prerogative of mercy is to be sovereignly exercised at all, it should now have free scope. Methinks when the eternal God sees a poor sinner standing before himself, and hears him cry, "I am guilty, Lord! I am guilty through and through! I alone am guilty! I have broken thy law! If thou smite me thou art just! My heart is broken because I have sinned. I cannot be more wretched than I now am, for sin is my plague and my misery; and while I confess it I do not think that my confession has any merit in it. Save me for Jesus' sake!" "Why, methinks," the mighty God says, "I have brought that soul, through my grace, into a state in which it is ready to receive the precious gift of justification and pardon through the blood of my dear Son."

See how one grace gives a fitness for another. The sinner is brought to Jesus, his heart is broken, and then it is ready to be bound up. Time penitent sinner has paid honor to the prerogative of the law-giver. He has, as far as he could do so, dethroned the law-giver by his sin, but now by his confession he restores him to his throne. Such a sinner knows the bitterness of sin, amid knowing its bitterness, he will hate it for the future. If he be pardoned, he will not go back as the dog to his vomit, or the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. This pardoned sinner will not take to himself the credit of having been pardoned by his confessions, he will not go

abroad and talk lightly of his sin, he will be sure to speak much of the leniency of the Law-giver and the power of Jesus' precious blood; he will admire evermore, even in eternity, the mighty grace which pardoned such as he is. On the other hand, if man were forgiven, and no true penitence wrought in him, what would be the result? Why, it would be turning wolves loose upon society. Methinks if God gave forgiveness to men without working a work of grace in them by which they are brought to repentance, it would be offering a premium for sin, it would be breaking down the floodgates which restrain vice, it would be destroying all the excellent fruits which free grace is intended to produce. What! is the man to be pardoned for all the past and to remain without repentance for his evil ways? Then will he make the future just as the past has been; nay, he will sin with a higher hand and with a stronger arm. because he sees with what impunity he may rebel. What! shall a proud, unhumiliated sinner rejoice in the forgiving love of the Father? Then will he arrogantly boast that there was not much evil in his sin after all; he will lie no singer to the praise of sovereign grace, but rather, with the boastful lips of the legalist he will render unto himself praise for the dexterous manner in which he has escaped from the condemnation due to sin. God will give pardon to those only to whom he gives repentance, for it were unsafe to give it elsewhere. God bring us down and lay us in the dust, for then, and then only. are we prepared to hear him say, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee."

I take it for granted that there are some here who will say, "I wish I could repent. I know that it would not merit eternal life. I understand that faith-faith in Jesus Christ is the way by which I must be saved, but I would be humbled on account of sin." My dear friend, your desire to be humble may perhaps be an indication that you are already in that condition; but, if you are lamenting your hardness of heart, I will suggest two or three things. Remember your past sins. I do not want you to write out a list of them all, there is not paper enough in this world for that, but let some of them start out before your memory, and if they do not make you blush, they might to do so. Next think over all the aggravations of those sins. Recollect the training you had as a child. You were blessed with godly parents. Remember the providential warnings you received. Think of the light and knowledge against which you have offended; that tenderness of conscience against which you kicked. Then I beg you to consider against what a God you have offended, so great, so good, so kind, who has never done you a displeasure, but has been all generosity and kindness to you till this day.

Your offenses have been insults against the King of heaven. Your transgressions have been undermining, as far as they could, the throne of the eternal majesty. Look at sin in the light of God, to be humbled. And if this will not do it, let me pray that God the Holy Spirit may take you to the foot of the cross. Remember, that in order that sin might be put away, it was necessary that God should be veiled in human flesh. No one else could bear the load of sin but God, and he only could bear it by becoming man. See the suffering of the Savior when “despised and rejected.” Mark the spitting, the shame, the smiting. Watch his wounds;

*“Count the purple drops, and say,  
‘Thus must sin be wash’d away.’”*

And surely, if God the Holy Ghost bless it, such a meditation will make thee see the blackness and vileness of sin. John Bradford said, that when he was in prayer, he never liked to rise from his knees till he began to feel something of brokenness of heart. Get thee up to thy chamber, then, poor sinner, if thou wouldst have a broken and contrite spirit, and come not out until thou hast it. Remember, that thou wilt never feel so broken in heart as when thou canst see Jesus bearing all thy sins. Faith and repentance are born together, and aid the health of each other.

*“Law and terrors do but harden,  
All the while they work alone;  
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,  
Will dissolve a heart of stone.”*

Go as you are to Christ, and ask him to give that tenderness of heart which shall be to you the indication that pardon has come; for pardon cannot and will not come unattended by a melting of soul and a hatred of sin. Wrestle with the Lord! say, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” Get a fast hold upon the Savior by a vigorous faith in his great atonement. Oh! may his Spirit enable thee to do this! Say in thy soul, “Here I will abide, at the horns of the altar; if I perish I will perish at the foot of the cross. From my hope in Jesus I will not depart; but I will look up still and say, Savior, thy heart was broken for me, break my heart! Thou wast wounded, wound me! Thy blood was freely poured forth, for me, Lord let me pour forth my tears that I should have nailed thee to the tree. O Lord, dissolve my soul; melt it in tenderness, and thou shalt be for ever praised for making thine enemy thy friend.”

May God bless you, and make you truly repent, if you have not repented; and, if you have, may he enable you to continue in it all your days, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

# WITHHOLDING CORN.

NO. 642

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 30TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.” — Proverbs 11:26.*

IF I dared, I should always preach upon the comfortable promises and gracious doctrines of God’s Word. I find it most delightful and easy work to expatiate upon those themes of revelation which abound in sweetness and are full of savor and preciousness to the child of God. I said, “If I dared,” and you will ask me why I dare not? The answer is, because I have a solemn conviction on my mind, that if I would be clear of the blood of all men, I must strive to make my range of ministry as wide as the range of revelation, and I must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. I feel bound to go. not where my wishes would lead me, but where Holy Scripture has made a track for my feet. There are certain texts in the Scriptures which are very seldom preached upon, because it is thought that there is little gospel in them, and that the people when they go home will say to one another, “Well, I was not fed this morning Those who aim at pleasing men, may well be shy of such subjects. But I hold that, since God in his wisdom has placed these passages in the Bible, he intended his servants, the preachers of the Word, to expound them. We are, it strikes me, not to preach from selections of Scripture only, but from the whole of the Sacred Volume, for “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” I freely confess that I do not know why I have selected this text this morning, except that it haunted and hunted me until I could not forbear to preach upon it. It seems to force itself upon me, and to bore its way into my soul like a rifle shot. I thought it over and over and

could not make much of it, until I yielded up myself to it, saying within myself, "If the Lord has anything to say to the people out of my mouth, here it is-let him use it." If there should be any persons among our country friends, or our corn-dealing towns men, who this morning feel at all touched by the text, I cannot help it; there is my Master's message to them, and I can only deliver it with the best intentions, hoping that those to whom it comes home may be profited by it. It will, however, soon be clear to you that the verse before us has, besides its first meaning a weight of very important spiritual teaching in it, to which we shall all do well to take heed.

The text, as it stands, has to do, as you clearly see, with owners of corn and dealers in it. In Solomon's days there were very frequent famines. Communication between one nation and another was so extremely difficult that the transportation of wheat in any large quantities was not attempted; and therefore, if a failure in the crops occurred in one district. the scarcity in that neighborhood was not compensated by abundance in another, and terrible famines prevailed. Certain persons in those days, not only stored up all the corn which grew on their own fields, but purchased as much as they could of others, so as to raise the market above its natural level. This, under the circumstances was a very high affront put upon God, for instead of bearing their part in his judgments, these men enriched themselves by the poverty of their starving neighbors. There have been such people ever since Solomon's day, and although the present system of free trade has nearly put an end to that kind of thing, there are doubtless some who would again withhold their corn, even at famine prices, if they could rise the price still higher. How does Scripture deal with this peculiar form of greed in trade?

I cannot but admire the wonderful reserve of Holy Scripture, for as Mr. Arnot well observes, "in this brief maxim no arbitrary rule is laid down to the possessor of corn, that he must sell at a certain period and at a certain price: and yet the hungry are not left without a protecting law. The protection of the weak is entrusted not to small police regulations, but to great self-acting providential arrangements. The double fact is recorded in terms of peculiar distinctness, that he who in times of scarcity keeps up his corn in order to enrich himself is loathed by the people, and he who sells it freely is loved. This is all. There is no further legislation on the subject." Our narrow wisdom might have wished for some definite law upon the subject, something like a slidingscale, but the great ruler of heaven and earth falls into no such error. Laws which interfere between buyer and

seller, master and workman, by any form of law, are blunders and nuisances. Parliaments and princes have hung on to the antiquated absurdity of regulating prices, but the Holy Ghost does nothing of the kind. All the attempts of men to control the price of bread and wheat is sheer folly, as the history of France may well prove. The market goes best when it is left alone, and so in our text, there is no law enacted and no penalty threatened, except that which the nature of things makes inevitable. God knows political economy, whether men do or not, and leaving the coarse machinery of police regulations, he puts the offender under a form of self-acting legislature which is far more efficient. The text seems to say, "Well, if you have no love to your neighbor, and choose to keep your wheat, I make no law to break open your granary or pull down your ricks, but you will most certainly gain the hatred, contempt, and curse of the people among whom you dwell."

Yen see, dear friends, that the man may do as he pleases about selling or not, but he cannot escape from the curse of the people if he chooses to lock up his grain; and on the other hand if he will sell at a proper price, or, as another translation reads it. break his bread, that is to say, give it to the starving if they cannot buy it, he will receive blessings not only from the people but from heaven itself.

Brethren, this is a matter of fact, that any man of any observation must have seen, that there is no transaction which ever brings such ill-will upon a man, such general condemnation, especially from the poor, as withholding the corn. Common consent condemns the hoarder, and human nature revolts at his offense. Ask any one you choose to meet, except he be himself deep in the same mire, and he will join you in crying out against it. Of course there are many ways of defending the deed, but there is no way of escaping the fact that the people curse the doer of it in their hearts. "Well," says one, "it is my own corn, I may do as I like with it." Just so, nobody said you could not; nobody disputed your rights only you are warned that in hoarding it you are sure to get the people's curse. You cannot alter that; it will follow and hang about your heels, and as far as the fact is known, it will make men curl the lip at you and sneer if they are your equals, while the working-men deep in their hearts will abhor you. No matter how kind you may be to the poor in other matters. nor how you may have given your money in other ways, your holding the corn will be a scorn among your enemies, and an offense to your best friends. It is not always an ill sign when the voice of the people is against a man, but in this

case Scripture endorses it, and he who dares to run the risk is none too wise.

“Ah,” says another, “I do not see the wrong of withholding. There are laws of supply and demand, and the preacher does not understand political economy.” The preacher, however, thinks he does understand it, and even if he does not, a child can comprehend the text before him, and with that we have to deal just now. Solomon here tells you that if you like to carry out political economy in the withholding way, you will get cursed for it, and depend upon it YOU WILL. Facts are stubborn things, and this is one that withholding corn earns me the curse of the people, and that is what no Christian man would wish to bear.

“But what business is that of the preacher’s?” He answers that he thanks God that he has no share in it whatever, but he is set in his place to rebuke what God rebukes, and he is doing no more than expounding God’s own word upon the matter. Whether you hear or forbear, there is the truth, and may the Lord bless it to you. “Well, we ought not to hear such things on Sundays.” What, not read our Bibles on Sundays-not explain the meaning of a text on Sundays? You would not have heard me on a Monday some of you, and therefore you have it to-day. Do not be angry with the text, but look at it and read it, and then afterwards choose you as you will. “He that withholdeth corn,” God says, “the people shall curse him;” and if you wish to have ill-will, and the bad word of thousands of poor cottagers and all others who have human sympathies, then withhold your corn. Thank God, the worst monopoliser cannot do much mischief now-a-days, for by the gracious providence of God, which has burst the fetters of commerce we are not likely to feel any very great straitness for bread in this country. Should our own crops fail, the harvests of other lands supply the masses with their food. The crime is growing scarcer and scarcer; but, if any cases still survive, and men choose to follow so ruinous a course, they will get cursed for it in mutterings deep if silent, and in sneers as bitter as they are well deserved.

By your leave, I shall now take a step above my text, using it as a ladder to mount to a yet higher truth. If it brings a curse upon a man to withhold the bread which perisheth, what a weight of curse will light upon that man who withholds the bread of eternal life. If the people shall curse the man who keeps back the bread which merely sustains the body, what shall be the withering denunciations which shall overwhelm the soul of him who deals



deceitfully with the bread of eternal life? That seems to me to be a fair deduction from the text, and at that truth we will aim this morning First, I shall attempt to show the ways in which the bread of life may be withheld from the people, and the curse which will follow; secondly, I shall try to depict the blessedness of the man who “breaketh it,” as another translation hath it, to the people; and, then, thirdly, we shall conclude by opening our own granaries and breaking some of this bread among the assembled multitude..

**I.** First, he that withholdeth the bread of life will surely get the people’s curse upon him. How CAN THIS BE DONE?

**1.** It may be readily accomplished by locking up the Word of God in an unknown language, or by delivering and preaching it in such a style that the people shalt not comprehend it. The Romish Church for many years kept the sacred Scriptures in an unknown tongue, and resisted all attempts to translate the book of God into the vulgar language of the people. What a curse Rome has had resting on her head. To those who know the enormity of this wickedness in holding back the word of life, it is scarcely possible to think of Rome without invoking judgement upon her. What myriads of souls went down to the pit perishing through lack of knowledge. during what were called the Dark Ages! What fearful imprecations they must be uttering even now upon Popes and Cardinals, and Priests who had the key of the kingdom, but would neither enter themselves nor suffer others to enter there! They had the light but they concealed it in a dark lantern, and the nations were compelled to sit in the darkness of profound ignorance and superstition because they would not give them the light. Surely the people shall curse such for ever. But are these the only offenders? Is not their crime prolonged by those ministers who aim at delivering themselves in an oratorical style, with flowers of rhetoric far too fine to be reached by the common people? We have heard of some, and we fear we know some, who would rather round a period than win a soul, to whom it is the first and the last object to deliver refined thoughts in elegant and elaborate language, and, having so done, having soared aloft on the spread-eagle’s wing far out of sight, they are content to have dazzled the many, and displayed themselves. Truly such. men withhold the corn. What can the poor countrymen and servants, who are sitting in the aisles, make out of their eloquence? What can the work-people, who come in to hear something that may do them good, make out of their outlandish big talk? The terms of theology, the phrases of art, the definitions of philosophy, the

jargon of science, are an unknown tongue to the young godly ploughmen or praying shopkeepers. "Alas!" says he, "this does not come to me-I cannot get at it." Possibly, in their ignorance, some people think the highflyers very learned men, but in reality they are far from it; for plainness of speech is a better sign of learning than high-sounding words and soaring sentences.

Oh, dear friends, when we preach the gospel plainly, I am sure we have our reward! When preaching in some village chapel, or from a waggon in a field, it is no small delight to watch the faces of the men in smockfrocks and the women in their print gowns, as they catch or feel the force of an inspired truth; plain speech wins their blessing. But to stand and talk right over the people's heads-what is it but having the corn and keeping it from those who want it? Simplicity is the authorised style of true gospel ministry. "Having this ministry," says the apostle, "we use great plainness of speech." The common people heard the Master gladly, which they would not have done if he had spoken in highflown language. Whitfield, the prince of preachers, was mainly so because of the market language which he used. Let all of us who have the bread of life try to be very plain. You who write tracts, or preach in the street, or you that teach children, break the large slices of truth into small pieces, and crack the shells of the hard nuts. Take away the crust for the babes, and pick out the stones from the fruit. Beware lest in seeking an excess of refinement you withhold the corn and win the people's curse.

**2.** But, secondly, we may fall into this sin by keeping back the most important and vital truths of Revelation, and giving a prominence to other things, which are but secondary. My brethren, if I were to stand in this pulpit, and for the next few months address you upon moral precepts, the excellence of virtue or the faultiness of vice; if you could come out of this place and say, time after time, "We hear nothing about Jesus Christ; we do not know whether there be any Holy Ghost;" if I were gifted with ever so much of ability-if these were my themes, however earnestly I pressed them, I should be guilty of withholding the corn, the true food of souls. Morality brings no food to hungry souls, although it is a good thing in its place. Dissuasives from vice are not the bread of heaven, though well enough in their way. We need to have the great doctrines of grace brought forward, for the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, and it is by preaching the truth as it is in Jesus, that souls are won to him. I grieve to think how indistinct some preachers are upon the doctrines of grace: they dare not say

“Election,” or if they do they tremble directly, and guard their words with shields so huge that the poor truth is crushed beneath them. As to final perseverance, effectual calling, particular redemption, or any of those grand truths wherein the fatness, and savor, and marrow of the gospel is to be found, you may listen to some of them from the beginning of January to the end of December, without hearing a word. This will not do: this is taking away the backbone from the spiritual man; it is tearing away the vitals of the gospel; it is giving to the people husks for wheat, and straw and chaff, instead of corn. Above all, that ministry is an abomination which puts Jesus Christ in the background. My brethren and sisters, we must not only hear something about Jesus Christ, but our preaching must be mainly about Him. He must be its head and front; nay, let me say, in some sense, he must be all that the preacher has to preach. Christ crucified must be the general summary of his ministry; and he must be able to say, when he retires from it, and is called up higher, “I have preached Christ. Of the things which I have spoken, this is the sum: I have preached my Master and what my Master gave me.” O my brethren, what a guilty ministry is that in which the blood has no place—the ministry which denies or undervalues the atoning sacrifice of the great Redeemer! God have mercy upon us that we have not preached this fundamental truth so earnestly as we ought to have done, but still we can plead before him, and say, we have truly desired to do it.

*“E’er since by faith I saw the stream  
His flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.”*

What is the use of any ministry of which that is not true? It is withholding corn, and in eternity the lost will curse their destroyer.

But we must not talk about ministers, of whom there are not many here: we will come down to you. Many of you are Sunday-school teachers: now you can sin in this way in the very same sense. Suppose as a Sunday-school teacher you are content with making the little ones read through the lesson, satisfied with filling up the hour or the hour and-a-half, and feeling you have done a good deal in making the little fellows sit still, and so on. Ah! my brother and sister, it is very solemn work. You have undertaken to teach these young immortals, and if you are satisfied with just making them go through the routine, take heed, lest when they grow up, they come to curse you. I am afraid that many Sunday-school addresses have no gospel

in them. I do not see why the same gospel should not be preached to children as to grown-up people. I think it should. To stand up in a Sunday-school and say, "Now, be good boys and girls and God will love you," is telling lies. I know the teachers of our school feel the importance of delivering the truth as it is in Jesus to their children, and you therefore tell them, "You are lost and ruined, and your salvation is in Jesus Christ: look to him and live." The teacher whose general teaching is not full of Christ will be called to a sad account in the day when Christ shall come. Dear teachers of the school, whatever you do not know, do know your Lord, and whatever you cannot get into the youngsters' heads, do make it a matter of prayer that you may get a knowledge of Christ and his atoning blood into their young hearts by the Holy Ghost. The same is also true of those of our beloved friends who conduct Bible classes, or who in any way teach the people. I do not know that I have any necessity to say this to the most of you here, but still I will say it for the good of others; you must not my brethren get away from your great theme. It is of no use to go to the people empty-handed, we must take them bread; we only mock them by offering them stones, if we talk to them about the histories and precepts of Scripture and forget the cross. Let our teaching be full of grace and truth: let us deliver our souls of every doctrine as we find it in Scripture, and let us be determined that if men do perish, it shall not be for want of knowing the way of salvation.

**3.** We may withhold the bread of life, dear friends, by a want of loving in our labor; because the mere telling out the plan of salvation is of no great service; God may bless it, but he does not often do so.

That which God blesses to the saving of sinners is truth attended by the earnestness of the speaker, the loving anguish of a heart which stirs the preacher's soul. What shall I say here? for if I speak, I do but condemn myself. Think of the preaching of Baxter. He preached for many years, but he said he never went into his pulpit without his knees knocking together; and Martin Luther said the same. Truly it is enough to make any man tremble, when he feels that he is God's mouth to immortal souls. 'If they perish and thou warn them not, their blood will I require at thy hand.' Surely this ought to give a melting heart and streaming eyes to God's ministers! But, I say, I remember reading of Baxter's ministry—oh what pleading there was in it! The man seemed as if he never would go out of the pulpit till his hearers had received the truth, he wept, and sighed, and sobbed, unless they came to Jesus Christ. You know how he followed them

to their houses, watched them through the streets of Kidderminster. and would give them no rest till they thought about eternal things, and he was privileged thus to break the bread of life to many thousands, although his body was as full of physical pain as his heart was of holy anxiety. O for something of r. Baxter's spirit to make us love the souls of men as he did! We are guilty of withholding corn, unless we preach with a sympathising, loving, tender, affectionate, earnest, anxious soul. Brethren and sisters, you are most of you doing something for Jesus Christ; let me therefore put this very plainly to you. If you get through your work for God as a mere matter of form, however true may be that which you have to say, and however carefully you may deliver it, yet still if the truth you deliver is not delivered with holy anxiety, with earnestness, with fervor, with love, with affection, and ahoy all, if it be not attended with prayer, take heed lest in some day to come you get the curse of those from whom you withheld the bread. How would you like, Sunday-school teachers, to see a lad in your class grow up and go into sin? How would you like to meet him some day on a sick bed. when his vices had at last brought him to his end; how would you like that he should look into your face and say, "Ah! teacher, you were never earnest with me: you told me the truth, but you told it me so coldly that I did not believe it. If I had seen one tear in your eye, I think there would have been one in mine. If I thought you felt what you were saying, I sometimes think I should have felt it too; but you merely kept me still and told me it all, as if it were no great matter, and so I doubted the whole, and from doubt went on to unbelief and ran into sin, and here I am. O that you had wept over me as such-and-such a teacher did with my brother! How different is my brother from what I am. He was in another class, and his teacher took him before God in prayer; prayed with him as well as for him, told him the truth, but did more, labored to drive it home as with a great hammer, while he pleaded with him to lay hold on eternal life. Teacher, would to God that you had been more earnest with me." Beloved, seek to rid yourselves of any future regrets in this matter. it is no small satisfaction, when you bear the death-bell toll, to say, "Well, I did all I could for that soul, and whether it be in heaven or hell, my conscience is clear. You cannot save, but still, God who works by means, may make you the instrument of conveying salvation to sinners: or, on the other hand, you may be made instruments of unrighteousness through whom Satan may harden these children's hearts, even to their everlasting ruin. I take the case of a Sunday-school teacher, but I intend the 'remarks for every worker. O let us work for God with our whole hearts. God make us more awfully in

earnest. Life is earnest, death is earnest, heaven is earnest, hell is earnest, Christ is earnest, God is earnest; let us be clad with zeal, as with a cloak, and go forth to serve the Lord with all our soul and strength, as his Holy Spirit shall enable us.

4. Fourthly, we may be found guilty of withholding corn by refusing to labor zealously for the spread of the kingdom of Christ and the conversion of sinners. I am afraid that the Churches of the past were not altogether without a curse because of their deficiency in the matter of missions and home evangelization. During the pastorate of my venerated predecessor, Dr. Gill, this Church, instead of increasing, gradually decreased; and although the age in which he lived was honored with many great and excellent men, yet the state of our own denomination, and the Presbyterian body, and the Independent body, in England was most lamentable. Many of the Churches were gradually sliding into Unitarianism, and the simple gospel of Jesus Christ was scarcely preached, or, where preached, it was without any power whatever: and I take it that the reason was very much that the Churches were content to be edified themselves, but had no bowels of compassion for the perishing multitudes around and abroad. But mark this, from the day when Fuller, Carey, Sutcliffe, and others, met together to send out missionaries to India the sun began to dawn of a gracious revival which is not over yet, for bad as the state of the Churches now is, yet it is marvellously an improvement upon anything before the age of missions. Though not as zealous as we ought to be, the zeal of Christendom is one hundred times greater than it was then; and, as for what is done for winning souls, brethren, the Churches now are like a garden of the Lord compared with what they were then. I believe that the neglect of sending the word to the heathen brought a blight and a curse upon the Churches, which is now happily removed. Yet even to-day we find professors who are always doubting. They never get beyond-

*“’Tis a point I long to know.”*

There they stick, and never know whether they are saved or not. Full assurance is to be a tempting morsel which they have not yet tasted. Their eyes do not sparkle with heavenly delight; they know not what it is to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; their raptures are very few, their joys very shallow. I will tell you why. In almost every case these people do nothing for souls; they withhold the corn, and therefore they get this curse in their souls, that they shall not enjoy their own religion because

they do not want to lead other people into it. If you put your hands into your pockets and say, "Well, glory be to God; I trust I am one of the elect, and whatever becomes of the rest of mankind really is not my concern. Every man for himself, say I "-that is such an unchristian spirit, so antagonistic to the whole life of Jesus Christ, that if you get sorely whipped in providence, I can only hope you may be blessed by it; but I would not pray that the rod may be removed until you are scourged into a better temper." Commend me to the Christian who says, "I bless God I am saved; now what can I do for others?" The first thing in the morning he prays, "God help me to say a word to some soul this day." During the day, wherever he may be, he is watching his opportunity, and will do good if he can. He is concerned about his children: it sometimes breaks his heart to think that they are not saved. If he happens to have an ungodly wife, it is his daily burden, "Oh God, save my wife!" When he goes to a place of worship' he does not expect the minister to make sermons always on purpose for him, but he says "I shall sit here and pray God to bless the word," and if he looks round the chapel. and sees one that he loves, he prays for him, "God send the word home to him." When service is over, a man of this' kind will waylay the unconverted, and try to get a personal word with them; and see if he cannot discover some beginnings of grace in their souls. This is how earnest Christians live; and let me tell you, as a rule, though they have the griefs of other men's souls to carry, they do not have much grief about their own. As a rule, their Master favors them with the light of his countenance; they are watering others and they are watered themselves also. May this be your work and mine! But some of you say nothing for Christ at all. You are too timid you' say, and others of you are too indifferent, too thoughtless about others. Oh, the opportunities many of you have lost! Oh, the many who have died to whom you might have spoken 'but you did not! Oh, the people that are now in the darkness of ignorance who get no light from 'you! You have light, but you keep it. They are dying, and you have the healing medicine, but you will not tell them of it. May God' deliver you from the curse of those who thus withhold the corn.

We will only mention one more form of this evil. Some may be said to be guilty of withholding the corn, because while they themselves do not speak for Christ, they do not help those who can. No 'Christian man ought to go to bed with an easy conscience, if he has thousands of pounds which he does not require, which lies by unused for God. There must be many

Christians in this rich country who have not consecrated their substance to the Lords When a. man can say, "I 'have money which I really do not need, and my children do not' require 'it; and this is money absolutely needed for God's cause," ought he to keep it from the Lord Jesus?" Must you confess' that so many missionaries might he sent out to-morrow, if you just drew a cheque and handed it over to the proper quarter, then why not do it?' A destitute neighborhood needs a place of worship, and if I can build it if I would, how am I to answer for it to my Lord?

I cannot understand how a man can love God 'when he only lives to heap up riches. I can with great difficulty imagine such a case, but I fear that such cannot be real piety. It seems to me that, if I have any religion in my soul, it will make me not only say with Dr. Watts:-

*"Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine  
Demands my soul, my life, may all."*

but I think it would make me carry it out. I will not propose to you that you should act indiscreetly in giving, so as to beggar your families, or deprive yourselves of what is necessary; you know I am not so foolish. But I am speaking to many Christians who have net only enough but to spa re, and who will continue to accumulate, and accumulate, and accumulate, and I cannot think that they can feel that they are doing right in" the sight of God. O God! this great city needing preachers, needing the gospel-thousands needing even bread to keep them from starving-and for thy professing people to he heaping their coffers fuller and fuller! Why surely, if I do this, I am heaping up wrath against the day of wrath, and I shall find it come into my bosom hot and fierce from the God of Sabaoth, to whom my gold and my silver will cry out against me. Let us not he guilty of this, but 'each in our own station, as far as we can, let us he aiding others to preach the word if we cannot preach it ourselves. Dozens of young men are desirous' to enter our College, and you can help them to go forth 'to preach, if you cannot preach yourself.

**II.** I am pleased 'to turn to the other subject for a minute or two.

I am to speak upon THE BLESSEDNESS WHICH THOSE' POSSESS WHO  
BREAK THE BREAD OF LIFE.



To describe it is altogether beyond my power. You must know, and taste, and feel it, beloved. There are many blessednesses in doing good to others. God is a good paymaster; he pays his servants while at work as well as when they have done it; and 'one of his payments is this, an easy conscience. If you have spoken faithfully only to one person, when you go to bed at night, you feel happy in thinking "I have this day discharged my conscience of that man's blood." You do not know how delightful a Sabbath evening is to some of us when God has helped us to be faithful; how sweet to feel, "I have made many blunders, shown many infirmities of the flesh, and so on, but I have preached the gospel and preached it with my whole heart to the best of my ability." One feels' a burden taken off one's back, and there is a joy and satisfaction unknown to those who sit at home doing nothing. You in your class at the Sunday-school, I know you feel when Sunday is over, though it is a very hard day's work for some of you after the six days' toil in the week, you feel "I thank God I did not spend that afternoon in lolling about at home, but I did speak a word for Jesus." You will find such a peace of mind that you would not give it up for all the world. Then there is a great comfort in doing something for Jesus." Look into his face, what' would you not do for him? When first converted did you not think you could do ten thousand things for Jesus; the moment your burden was off your back and your sins forgiven, how you felt you could follow him through floods and flames! Have you lived up to your resolutions, brethren? Have you kept up to your own ideas of Christian duties? I do not suppose any of us can say that" we have. Still, what little we have done has been an unspeakable 'delight; when we have felt that we have been crowning his head, and strewing palm-branches in his path. O' what a happiness to place jewels in his crown, and give him to see of the travail of his soul! Beloved, there is very great reward in watching the first buddings of conviction in a young soul! To say of that girl in the class, "She seems so tender of heart, I do hope that there is the Lord's work there." To go home and pray over that boy, who said something in the afternoon to make you think he must know something more than he seemed to know!' Oh, the joy of hope! But as for the joy of success! It is unspeakable. I recollect the first soul that God ever gave me-she is in heaven now-but I remember when my good deacon said to me, "God has set his seal on your ministry in this place, sir." Oh, if anybody had said to me, "Somebody has left you twenty thousand pounds," I should not have given a snap of my fingers for it, compared with that joy which I felt when I was told' that God had set his seal on my ministry. "Who is it?" I

asked. "Why, it is a poor laboring man's wife! she went home broken-hearted by the sermon two or three Sundays ago, and she has been in great trouble of soul, but she has found peace, and she says she would like to speak to you." I felt like the boy who has earned his first guinea, like a diver who has been down to the depths of the sea and brought up a rare pearl-I prize each one whom God has given me, but I prize that woman most. Since then my God has given me many thousands of souls, who profess to have found the Savior by hearing or reading words which have come from my lips. Well, this joy, overwhelming as it is, is a hungry sort of joy-you want more of it: for the more you have of spiritual children, the more your soul desires to see them multiplied. Let me tell you, that to be a soul-winner is the happiest thing in this world, and with every soul you bring to Jesus Christ, you seem to get a new heaven here upon earth. But what will be the joy of soul-winning when we get up above! What happiness to the Christian minister to be saluted on his entrance into heaven by many spiritual children! They will call him "Father," for though they are not married nor given in marriage, though natural relations are all over, yet spiritual relations last for ever. Oh! how sweet is that sentence, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Do you know what the joy of Christ is over a saved sinner? You cannot guess it. You would need to know the griefs he suffered to save that sinner. O the joys he must feel when he sees that sinner saved as the result of his griefs: 'this is time very joy which you and I are to possess in heaven: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Yes, when he mounts the throne, you shall mount with him. When the heaven rings with "Well done, well done," you shall partake in the reward; you have toiled with him, you have suffered with him, you shall now reign with him; you have sown with him, you shall reap with him; you were despised with him, you shall now be honored with him; your face was covered with sweat like his and your soul was grieved for the sins of men as his soul was, now shall your face be bright with heaven's splendor as is his countenance, and now shall your soul be filled with beatific joys even as his soul is. He that breaketh bread, blessings shall be upon his head.

**III.** Now I have to open the GRANARY for a minute myself.

Hungry sinners, wanting a Savior, we cannot withhold the bread from you. You may never come to hear the gospel again; we, therefore, will open the granary very wide. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, became man to save men, and inasmuch as God's wrath was due to sin, Christ took the sin of all who have ever believed, or ever shall believe on him, and, taking all their sins,

he was punished in their room and place, and stead, so that God can now justly forgive sin because Christ was punished in the stead of sinners, and suffered divine wrath for them. Now this is the way of salvation, that thou trust this Son of God with thy soul. and, if thou dost so, then know that thy sins are now forgiven thee, and that thou art saved. Concerning this salvation, hear thou just these few words.

It is a satisfying salvation. Here is all that thou canst want. Thy conscience shall be at ease for ever if thou believest in Jesus: thy biggest sins shall no longer trouble thee, thy blackest iniquities shall no longer haunt thee. Believing in Jesus. every sin thou hast of thought and word and deed shall be cast into the depths of the sea and never shall be mentioned against thee any more for ever.

It is an all-sufficient salvation too. However great thy sins, Christ's blood can take all away. However deep thy needs, Christ can supply them. Thou canst not be so big a sinner as he is a Savior. Thou mayest be the worst sinner out of hell, but thou art not too great for him to remove; he can carry elephantine sinners upon his shoulders, and bear gigantic mountains of guilt upon his head into the wilderness of forgetfulness. He has enough for thee however deep thy necessity.

It is, moreover, a complete salvation. Sovereign mercy does not stand on the mountain and cry to you, climb up hither and I will save you. Eternal mercy comes down the valley to you just where you are, and meets your case just as it is, and never leaves you till it has made you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Christ does not want you to pay one talent out of the hundred and promise to pay for you the ninety-nine. He will discharge all your debts of sin. All that you want to take you up to heaven is provided in Jesus.

This is a present salvation—a salvation which, if it come to you, will save you now. You shall be a child of God this very hour, and ere that clock shall strike again, you shall rejoice in the peace' which the Spirit of God gives you, if you believe on him.

It is an available salvation, freely presented to you in Christ Jesus. Remember the text of two or three Sundays ago: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Jesus casts out none that come to him. Oh that thou mayest be led to come this morning.

Thus have I tried to avoid the sin of withholding corn; and if any in this house of prayer have been guilty of it, I pray you avoid the curse of the people, and seek the blessing of the Most High God, by this day endeavoring to scatter everywhere the bread of life. Go and work for God wherever you have an opportunity, and help us in our prayers and efforts to send forth more laborers into the harvest, for the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Amen.

# NO TEARS IN HEAVEN.

NO. 643

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 6TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” — Revelation 7:17.*

IT is an ill thing to be always mourning, sighing, and complaining concerning the present. However dark it may be, we may surely recall some fond remembrances of the past. There were days of brightness, there were seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Be not slow to confess, O believing soul, that the Lord has been thy help! and though now thy burden be very heavy, thou wilt find an addition to thy strength in the thought of seasons long since past, when the Lord lightened thy load, and made thy heart to leap for joy. Yet more delightful will it be to expect the future. The night is dark, but the morning cometh. Over the hills of darkness the day breaketh. It may be that the road is rough, but its end is almost in view, Thou hast been clambering up the steep heights of Pisgah, and from the brow thereof thou mayest view thy glorious heritage. True the tomb is before thee, but thy Lord has snatched the sting from death, and the victory from the grave. Do not, O burdened spirit, confine thyself to the narrow miseries of the present hour, but let thine eye gaze with fondness upon the enjoyment of the past, and view with equal ardor the infinite blessings of old eternity, when thou wast not, but when God set thee apart for himself, and wrote thy name in his book of life; and let thy glance flash forward to the future eternity, the mercies which shall be thine even here on earth, and the glories which are stored up for thee beyond the skies. I shall be well rewarded this morning if I shall minister comfort to one heavy spirit by leading it to remember the glory which is yet to be revealed.

Coming to our text, we shall observe, in the first place, that as God is to wipe away tears from the faces of the glorified, we may well infer that their eyes will be filled with tears till then; and in the second place, it is worthy of reflection that as God never changes, even now he is engaged in drying tears from his children's eyes; and then, coming right into the heart of the text, we shall dwell upon the great truth, that in heaven Divine Love removes all tears from the glorified; and so we shall close, by making some inquiry as to whether or not we belong to that happy company.

**I.** Our first subject of meditation is the inference that TEARS ARE TO FILL THE EYES OF BELIEVERS UNTIL THEY ENTER THE PROMISED REST. There would be no need to wipe them away if there were none remaining. They come to the very gates of heaven weeping, and accompanied by their two comrades, sorrow and sighing; the tears are dried, and sorrow and sighing flee away. The weeping willow grows not by the river of the water of life, but it is plentiful enough below; nor shall we lose it till we change it for the palm-branch of victory. Sorrow's dewdrop will never cease to fall until it is transformed into the pearl of everlasting bliss.

*“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the place where sorrow is unknown.”*

Religion brings deliverance from the curse, but not exemption from trial.

The ancients were accustomed to use bottles in which to catch the tears of mourners, Methinks I see three bottles filled with the tears of believers. The first is a common bottle, the ordinary lachrymatory containing griefs incidental to all men, for believers suffer even as the rest of the race. Physical pain by no means spares the servants of God. Their nerves, and blood-vessels, and limbs, and inward organs, are as susceptible of disease as those of unregenerate men. Some of the choicest saints have lain longest on beds of sickness, and those who are dearest to the heart of God have felt the heaviest blows of the chastening rod. There are pains which, despite the efforts of patience, compel the tears to wet the cheeks. The human frame is capable of a fearful degree of agony, and few there be who have not at some time or other watered their couch with tears because of the acuteness of their pains. Coupled with this, there are the losses and crosses of daily life. What Christian among you trades without occasional difficulties and serious losses? Have any of you a lot so easy that you have nothing to deplore? Are there no crosses at home? Are there no troubles abroad? Can you travel from the first of January to the last of December

without feeling the weariness of the way? Have you no blighted field, no bad debt, no slandered name, no harsh word, no sick child, no suffering wife to bring before the Lord in weeping prayer? You must be an inhabitant of another planet if you have had no griefs, for man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. No ship can navigate the Atlantic of earth without meeting with storms, it is only upon the Pacific of heaven that all is calm for evermore. Believers must through much tribulation, inherit the kingdom of heaven. "Trials must and will befall." Death contributes to our woes; the heirs of immortality are often summoned to gather around the tomb. Who hath not lost a friend? If Jesus wept, expect not that we shall be without the tears of bereavement; the well-beloved Lazarus died, and so will our choicest friends. Parents will go before us, infants will be snatched from us, brothers and sisters will fall before the scythe of death. Impartial foe of all, thou sparest neither virtue nor vice, holiness nor sin; with equal foot thou treadest on the cherished loves of all! The Christian knows also disappointments as bitter and as keen as other men. Judas betrays Christ, Ahithophel is a traitor to David. We have had our Ahithophels, and we may yet meet with our Judas. We have trusted in friends, and we have found their friendships fail. We have leaned upon what seemed a staff, and it has pierced us like a spear. You cannot, dear friends, traverse the wilderness of this world without discovering that thorns and thistles grow plenteously in it, and that., step as you may, your feet must sometimes feel their power to wound. The sea of life is salt to all men. Clouds hover over every landscape. We may forget to laugh, but we shall always know how to weep. As the saturated fleece must drip, so must the human race, cursed by the fall, weep out its frequent griefs.

I see before me a second bottle, it is black and foul, for it contains tears distilled by the force of the fires of sin. This bottle holds more than the first, and is far more regularly filled. Sin is more frequently the mother of sorrow than all the other ills of life put together. Dear brothers and sisters, I am convinced that we endure more sorrow from our sins than from God's darkest providence. Mark our rebellions want of resignation! When a trouble comes it is not the trial which makes us groan so much as our rebellion against it. It is true the ox goad is thrust into us, but we kick against it, and then it hurts us far more. Like men with naked feet we kick against the pricks. We head our vessel against the stream of God's will, and then murmur because the waves beat violently upon us. An unsubdued will is like a maniac's hand which tears himself. The chastisements which

come directly from our heavenly Father are never so hard to bear as the frettings and fumings of our unhumbed self-will. As the bird dashes against the wires of its cage and breaks its own wing, even so do we. If we would take the cross as our gracious Father gives it, it would not gall our shoulders, but since we revolt from it and loathe the burden, our shoulders grow raw and sore, and the load becomes intolerable. More submission, and we should have fewer tears. There are the tears, too, of wounded, injured pride, and how hot and scalding they are! When a man has been ambitious and has failed, how he will weep instead of standing corrected, or gathering up his courage for a wiser venture. When a friend has spoken slightly of us, or an enemy has accused us, how we have had to put our fingers to our hot eye-lids to keep the tears from streaming out, and have felt all the while as full of wretchedness as we well could be. Ah, these are cruel and wicked tears. God wipe them away from our eyes now! certainly he must do it before we shall be able to enter heaven. How numerous, too, are the tears of unbelief! We manufacture troubles for ourselves by anticipating future ills which may never come, or which, if they do come, may be like the clouds, all “big with mercy,” and “break with blessings on our head.” We get supposing what we should do if such-and-such a thing occurred, which thing God has determined never shall occur. We imagine ourselves in positions where Providence never intends to place us, and so we feel a thousand trials in fearing one. That bottle, I say, ought never to carry within it a tear from a believer’s eyes, and yet it has had whole floods poured into it. Oh, the wickedness of mistrust of God, and the bitterness with which that distrust is made to curse itself. Unbelief makes a rod for its own back; distrust of God is its own punishment; it brings such want of rest, such care, such tribulation of spirit into the mind, that he who loves himself and loves pleasure, had better seek to walk by faith and not by sight. Nor must I forget the scalding drops of anger against our fellow-men, and of petulance and irritation, because we cannot have our way with them; these are black and horrid damps, as noisome as the vaults of Tophet. May we ever be saved from such unholy tears. Sometimes, too, there are streams which arise from depressed spirits, spirits desponding because we have neglected the means of grace and the God of grace. The consolations of God are small with us because we have been seldom in secret prayer; we have lived at a distance from the Most High, and we have fallen into a melancholy state of mind. I thank God that there shall never come another tear from our eyes into that bottle when eternal love shall take us up to dwell with Jesus in his kingdom.



We would never overlook the third bottle, which is the true crystal lachrymatory into which holy tears may drop, tears like the lachrymae Christi, the tears of Jesus, so precious in the sight of God. Even these shall cease to flow in heaven. Tears of repentance, like glistening dewdrops fresh from the skies, are stored in this bottle; they are not of the earth, they come from heaven, and yet we cannot carry them thither with us. Good Rowland Hill used to say, repentance was such a sweet companion that the only regret he could have in going to heaven, was in leaving repentance behind him, for he could not shed the tears of repentance there. Oh, to weep for sin! It is so sweet a sorrow that I would a constant weeper be! Like a dripping well, my soul would ever drop with grief that I have offended my loving, tender, gracious God. Tears for Christ's injured honor and slightedness glisten in the crystal of our third bottle. When we hear Jesu's name blasphemed among men, or see his cause driven back in the day of battle, who will not weep then? Who can restrain his lamentations? Such tears are diamonds in Christ's esteem; blessed are the eyes which are mines of such royal treasure. If I cannot win crowns I will at least give tears. If I cannot make men love my Master, yet will I weep in secret places for the dishonor which they do him. These are holy drops, but they are all unknown in heaven. Tears of sympathy are much esteemed by our Lord; when we "weep with those that weep" we do well; these are never to be restrained this side the Jordan. Let them flow! the more of them the better for our spiritual health. Truly, when I think of the griefs of men, and above all, when I have communion with my Savior in his suffering, I would cry with George Herbert,-

*"Come all ye floods, ye clouds, ye rains,  
Dwell in my eyes! My grief hath need  
Of all the watery things that nature can produce!  
Let every vein suck up a river to supply my eyes,  
My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,  
Unless they get new conduits, fresh supplies,  
And with my state agree."*

It were well to go to the very uttermost of weeping if it were always of such a noble kind, as fellowship with Jesus brings. Let us never cease from weeping over sinners as Jesus did over Jerusalem; let us endeavor to snatch the firebrand from the flame, and weep when we cannot accomplish our purpose.

These three receptacles of tears will always be more or less filled by us as long as we are here, but in heaven the first bottle will not be needed, for the wells of earth's grief will all be dried up, and we shall drink from living fountains of water unsalted by a tear: as for the second, we shall have no depravity in our hearts, and so the black fountain will no longer yield its nauseous stream; and as for the third, there shall be no place amongst celestial occupations for weeping even of the most holy kind. Till then, we must expect to share in human griefs, and instead of praying against them, let us ask that they may be sanctified to us; I mean of course those of the former sort. Let us pray that tribulation may work patience, and patience experience, and experience the hope which maketh not ashamed. Let us pray that as the sharp edge of the graving tool is used upon us it may only remove our excrescencies and fashion us into images of our Lord and Master. Let us pray that the fire may consume nothing but the dross, and that the floods may wash away nothing but defilement. May we have to thank God that though before we were afflicted we went astray, yet now have we kept his word; and so shall we see it to be a blessed thing, a divinely wise thing, that we should tread the path of sorrow, and reach the gates of heaven with the tear drops glistening in our eyes.

## **II. Secondly, EVEN HERE IF WE WOULD HAVE OUR TEARS WIPED AWAY WE CANNOT DO BETTER THAN RETURN TO OUR GOD.**

He is the great tear wiper. Observe, brethren, that God can remove every vestige of grief from the hearts of his people by granting them complete resignation to his will. Our selfhood is the root of our sorrow. If self were perfectly conquered, it would be equal to us whether love ordained our pain or ease, appointed us wealth or poverty. If our will were completely God's will, then pain itself would be attended with pleasure, and sorrow would yield us joy for Christ's sake. As one fire puts out another, so the master passion of love to God and complete absorption in his sacred will quenches the fire of human grief and sorrow. Hearty resignation puts so much honey in the cup of gall that the wormwood is forgotten. As death is swallowed up in victory, so is tribulation swallowed up in complacency and delight in God.

He can also take away our tears by constraining our minds to dwell with delight upon the end which all our trials are working to produce. He can show us that they are working together for good, and as men of understanding, when we see that we shall be essentially enriched by our

losses, we shall be content with them; when we see that the medicine is curing us of mortal sickness, and that our sharpest pains are only saving us from pains far more terrible, then shall we kiss the rod and sing in the midst of tribulation, "Sweet affliction!" sweet affliction! since it yields such peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Moreover, he can take every tear from our eye in the time of trial by shedding abroad the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts more plentifully. He can make it clear to us that Christ is afflicted in our affliction. He can indulge us with a delightful sense of the divine virtue which dwells in his sympathy, and make us rejoice to be co-sufferers with the angel of the covenant, The Savior can make our hearts leap for joy by re-assuring us that we are written on the palms of his hands, and that we shall be with him where he is. Sick beds become thrones, and hovels ripen into palaces when Jesus is made sure to our souls. My brethren, the love of Christ, like a great flood, rolls over the most rugged rocks of afflictions, so high above them that we may float in perfect peace where others are a total wreck. The rage of the storm is all hushed when Christ is in the vessel. The waters saw thee, O Christ, the waters saw thee and were silent at the presence of their king.

The Lord can also take away all present sorrow and grief from us by providentially removing its cause. Providence is full of sweet surprises and unexpected turns. When the sea has ebbed its uttermost it turns again and covers all the sand. When we think the dungeon is fast, and that the bolt is rusted in, he can make the door fly open in a moment. When the river rolls deep and black before us he can divide it with a word, or bridge it with his hand. How often have you found it so in the past? As a pilgrim to Canaan you have passed through the Red Sea, in which you once feared you would be drowned; the bitter wells of Marah were made sweet by God's presence; you fought the Amalekite, you went through the terrible wilderness, you passed by the place of the fiery serpents, and you have yet been kept alive, and so shall you be. As the clear shining cometh after rain, so shall peace succeed your trials. As fly the black clouds before the compelling power of the wind, so will the eternal God make your griefs to fly before the energy of his grace. The smoking furnace of trouble shall be followed by the bright lamp of consolation.

Still, the surest method of getting rid of present tears, is communion and fellowship with God, When I can creep under the wing of my dear God and

nestle close to his bosom, let the world say what it will, and let the devil roar as he pleases, and let my sins accuse and threaten as they may, I am safe, content, happy, peaceful, rejoicing.

*“Let earth against my soul engage,  
And hellish darts be hurled;  
Now I can smile at Satan’s rage,  
And face a frowning world.”*

To say, “My Father, Cod,” to put myself right into his hand, and feel that I am safe there; to look up to him though it be with tears in my eyes and feel that he loves me, and then to put my head right into his bosom as the prodigal did, and sob my griefs out there into my Father’s heart, oh, this is the death of grief, and the life of all consolation. Is not Jehovah called the God of all comfort? You will find him so, beloved. He has been “our help in ages past;” he is “our hope for years to come.” If he had not been my help, then had my soul perished utterly in the day of its weariness and its heaviness, Oh, I bear testimony for him this day that you cannot go to him and pour out your heart before him without finding a delightful solace. When your friend cannot wipe away the tear, when you yourself with your strongest reasonings, and your boldest efforts cannot constrain yourself to resignation; when your heart beats high, and seems as if it would burst with grief, then ye people pour out your hearts before him. God is a refuge for us. He is our castle and high tower, our refuge and defense. Only go ye to him, and ye shall find that even here on earth God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.

**III.** Now we shall have to turn our thoughts to what is the real teaching of the text, namely, THE REMOVAL OF ALL TEARS FROM THE BLESSED ONES ABOVE.

There are many reasons why glorified spirits cannot weep. These are well known to you, but let us just hint at them. All outward causes of grief are gone. They will never hear the toll of the knell in heaven. The mattock and the shroud are unknown things there. The horrid thought of death never flits across an immortal spirit. They are never parted; the great meeting has taken place to part no more. Up yonder they have no losses and crosses in business. “They serve God day and night in his temple.” They know no broken friendships there. They have no ruined hearts, no blighted prospects. They know even as they are known, and they love even as they are loved. No pain can ever fall on them; as yet they have no bodies, but

when their bodies shall be raised from the grave they shall be spiritualized so that they shall not be capable of grief. The tear-gland shall be plucked away; although much may be there that is human, at least the tear-gland shall be gone, they shall have no need of that organ; their bodies shall be unsusceptible of grief; they shall rejoice for ever. Poverty, famine, distress, nakedness, peril, persecution, slander, all these shall have ceased. "The sun shall not light on them, nor any heat." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more," and therefore well may their tears cease to flow.

Again, all inward evils will have been removed by the perfect sanctification wrought in them by the Holy Ghost. No evil of heart, of unbelief in departing from the living God, shall vex them in Paradise; no suggestions of the arch enemy shall be met and assisted by the uprisings of iniquity within. They shall never be led to think hardly of God, for their hearts shall be all love; sin shall have no sweetness to them, for they shall be perfectly purified from all depraved desires. There shall be no lusts of the eye, no lusts of the flesh, no pride of life to be snares to their feet. Sin is shut out, and they are shut in. They are for ever blessed, because they are without fault before the throne of God. What a heaven must it be to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! Well may they cease to mourn who have ceased to sin.

All fear of change also has been for ever shut out. They know that they are eternally secure. Saints on earth are fearful of falling, some believers even dream of falling away; they think God will forsake them, and that men will persecute and take them. No such fears can vex the blessed ones who view their Father's face. Countless cycles may revolve, but eternity shall not be exhausted, and while eternity endures, their immortality and blessedness shall co-exist with it. They dwell within a city which shall never be stormed, they bask in a sun which shall never set, they swim in a flood-tide which shall never ebb, they drink of a river which shall never dry, they pluck fruit from a tree which shall never be withered. Their blessedness knows not the thought, which would act like a canker at its heart, that it might, perhaps, pass away and cease to be. They cannot, therefore, weep, because they are infallibly secure, and certainly assured of their eternal blessedness.

Why should they weep, when every desire is gratified? They cannot wish for anything which they shall not have. Eye and ear, heart and hand, judgment, imagination, hope, desire, will, every faculty shall be satisfied.

All their capacious powers can wish they shall continually enjoy. Though “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,” yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, to understand that they are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fullness of delight, is in them. They bathe themselves in the bottomless, shoreless sea of Infinite Beatitude.

Still, dear friends, this does not quite account for the fact, that all tears are wiped from their eyes. I like better the text which tells us that God shall do it, and I want you to think with me, of fountains of tears which exist even in heaven, so that the celestial ones must inevitably weep if God did not by a perpetual miracle take away their tears. It strikes me, that if God himself did not interfere by a perpetual outflow of abundant consolations, the glorified have very deep cause for weeping. You will say, “How is this?” Why, in the first place, if it were not for this, what regrets they must have for their past sins. The more holy a man is, the more he hates sin. It is a token of growth in sanctification, not that repentance becomes less acute, but that it becomes more and more deep. Surely, dear friends, when we shall be made perfectly holy, we shall have a greater hatred of sin. If on earth we could be perfectly holy, why, methinks we should do little else than mourn, to think that so foul, and black, and venomous a thing as sin had ever stained us; that we should offend against so good, so gracious, so tender, so abundantly loving a God. Why, the sight of Christ, “the Lamb in the midst of the throne,” would make them remember the sin from which he purged them; the sight of their heavenly Father’s perfection would be blinding to them, if it were not that by some sacred means, which we know not, God wipes away all these tears from their eyes; and though they cannot but regret that they have sinned, yet perhaps they know that sin has been made to glorify God by the overcoming power of Almighty grace; that sin has been made to be a black foil, a sort of setting for the sparkling jewel of eternal, sovereign grace, and it may be that for this reason they shed no tears over their past lives. They sing, “Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood:” but they sing that heavenly song without a tear in their eyes; I cannot understand how this may be, for I know I could not do so as I now am; let this be the best reason, that God has wiped away the tears from their eyes.

Again, do you not think, beloved, that the thought of the vast expense of shame and woe which the Savior lavished for their redemption must, in the natural order of things, be a constant source of grief? We sing sometimes

that hymn which reminds us of the angelic song before the throne, and in one of its verses the poet says:-

*“But when to Calvary they turn,  
Silent their harps abide;  
Suspended songs a moment mourn  
The God that loved and died.”*

Now, that is natural and poetical, but it is not true, for you know very well that there are no suspended songs in heaven, and that there is no mourning even over Christ “that loved and died.” It seems to me, that if I were thoroughly spiritualized and in such a holy state as those are in heaven, I could not look at the Lamb without tears in my eyes. How could I think of those five Wounds; that bloody sweat in Gethsemane; that cruel crowning with the thorns in Gabbatha; that mockery and shame at Golgotha-how could I think of it without tears? How could I feel that he loved me and gave himself for me, without bursting into a passion of holy affection and sorrow? Tears seem to be the natural expression of such hallowed joy and grief-

*“Love and grief my heart dividing,  
With my tears his feet I’ll bathe.”*

I must think it would be so in heaven, if it were not that by a glorious method, I know not how, God shall wipe away even those tears from their eyes. Does it not need the interference of God to accomplish this wonder?

Is there not another cause for grief, namely, wasted opportunities. Beloved, when we once ascend to heaven, there will be no more feeding of Christ’s hungry people; no giving drink to the thirsty; no visiting his sick ones, or his imprisoned ones; no clothing of the naked; there will be no instructing the ignorant; no holding forth the Word of God among “a crooked and perverse generation.” It has been often and truly said, if there could be regrets in heaven, those regrets would be, that we have wasted so many opportunities of honoring Christ on earth, opportunities which will then be past for ever. Now in heaven their hearts are not steeled and hardened, so that they can look back upon sins of omission without sorrow. I believe there will be the tenderest form of conscience there, for perfect purity would not be consistent with any degree of hardness of heart. If they be sensitive and tender in heart, it is inevitable that they should look back with regret upon the failures of the life below unless some more mighty emotion should overwhelm that of contrition. I can say,

beloved, if God would take me to heaven this morning, if he did not come in, and by a special act of his omnipotence, dry up that fountain of tears, I should almost forget the glories of Paradise in the midst of my own shame, that I have not preached more earnestly, and have not prayed more fervently, and labored more abundantly for Christ. That text, to which we heard a reference from a dear brother during the week, where Paul says, "I call God to witness that for the space of three years I ceased not night and day with tears, to warn every one of you," is a text that we cannot any of us read without blushes and tears; and in heaven, methinks, if I saw the Apostle Paul, I must burst out into weeping, if it were not for this text, which says that "God shall wipe away all tears," and these among them. Who but the Almighty God could do this!

Perhaps, again, another source of tears may suggest itself to you; namely, regrets in heaven for our mistakes, and misrepresentations, and unkindnesses towards other Christian brethren. How surprised we shall be to meet in heaven some whom we did not love on earth! We would not commune with them at the Lord's table. We would not own that they were Christians. We looked at them very askance if we saw them in the street. We were jealous of all their operations. We suspected their zeal as being nothing better than rant, and we looked upon their best exertions as having sinister motives at the bottom. We said many hard things, and felt a great many more than we said. When we shall see these unknown and unrecognized brethren in heaven wilt not their presence naturally remind us of our offenses against Christian love and spiritual unity? I cannot suppose a perfect man, looking at another perfect man, without regretting that he ever ill-treated him: it seems to me to be the trait of a gentleman, a Christian, and of a perfectly sanctified man above all others, that he should regret having misunderstood, and misconstrued, and misrepresented one who was as dear to Christ as himself. I am sure as I go round among the saints in heaven, I cannot (in the natural order of things) help feeling "I did not assist you as I ought to have done. I did not sympathize with you as I ought to have done. I spoke a hard word to you. I was estranged from you;" and I think you would all have to feel the same; inevitably you must, if it were not that by some heavenly means, I know not how, the eternal God shall so overshadow believers with the abundant bliss of his own self that even that cause of tears shall be wiped away.

Has it never struck you, dear friends, that if you go to heaven and see your dear children left behind unconverted, it would naturally be a cause of



sorrow? When my mother told me that if I perished she would have to say "Amen" to my condemnation, I knew it was true and it sounded very terrible, and had a good effect on my mind; but at the same time I could not help thinking, "Well, you will be very different from what you are now," and I did not think she would be improved. I thought "Well, I love to think of your weeping over me far better than to think of you as a perfect being, with a tearless eye, looking on the damnation of your own child." It really is a very terrible spectacle, the thought of a perfect being looking down upon hell, for instance, as Abraham did, and yet feeling no sorrow; for you will recollect that, in the tones in which Abraham addressed the rich man, there is nothing of pity, there is not a single syllable which betokens any sympathy with him in his dreadful woes; and one does not quite comprehend that perfect beings, God-like beings, beings full of love, and everything that constitutes the glory of God's complete nature, should yet be unable to weep, even over hell itself; they cannot weep over their own children lost and ruined! Now, how is this? If you will tell me, I shall be glad, for I cannot tell you. I do not believe that there will be one atom less tenderness, that there will be one fraction less of amiability, and love, and sympathy-I believe there will be more-but that they will be in some way so refined and purified, that while compassion for suffering is there, detestation of sin shall be there to balance it, and a state of complete equilibrium shall be attained. Perfect acquiescence in the divine will is probably the secret of it; but it is not my business to guess; I do not know what handkerchief the Lord will use, but I know that he will wipe all tears away from their faces, and these tears among them.

Yet, once again, it seems to me that spirits before the throne, taking, as they must do, a deep interest in everything which concerns the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, must feel deeply grieved when they see the cause of truth imperilled, and the kingdom of Christ, for a time, put back. Think of Luther, or Wickliffe, or John Knox, as they see the advances of Popery just now. Take John Knox first, if you will. Think of him looking down and seeing cathedrals rising in Scotland, dedicated to the service of the Pope and the devil. Oh, how the stern old man, even in glory, methinks, would begin to shake himself; and the old lion lash his sides once more, and half wish that he could come down and pull the nests to pieces that the rooks might fly away. Think of Wickliffe looking down on this country where the gospel has been preached so many years and seeing monks in the Church of England, and seeing spring up in our national establishment everywhere,

not disguised Popery as it was ten years ago, but stark naked Popery, downright Popery that unblushingly talks about the “Catholic Church,” and is not even Anglican any longer. What would Wickliffe say? Why, methink as he leans over the battlements of heaven, unless Wickliffe be mightily altered, and I cannot suppose he is (except for the better, and that would make him more tender-hearted and more zealous for God still), he must weep to think that England has gone back so far, and that on the dial of Ahaz the sun has beat a retreat. I do not know how it is they do not weep in heaven, but they do not. The souls under the altar cry, “How long? how long? how long?” There comes up a mighty intercession from those who were slaughtered in the days gone by for Christ: their prayer rises, “How long? how long? how long?” and God as yet does not avenge his own elect though they cry day and night unto him. Yet that delay does not cost them a single tear. They feel so sure that the victory will come, they anticipate so much the more splendid a triumph because of its delay, and therefore they do both patiently hope and quietly wait to see the salvation of God. They know that without us they cannot be made perfect, and so they wait till we are taken up, that the whole company may be completed, and that then the soul may be dressed in its body, and they may be perfected in their bliss: they wait but they do not weep. They wait and they cry, but in their cry no sorrow has a place. Now I do not understand this, because it seems to me that the more I long for the coming of Christ, the more I long to see his kingdom extended, the more I shall weep when things go wrong, when I see Christ blasphemed, his cross trampled in the mire, and the devil’s kingdom established; but the reason is all in this, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

I thought I would just indicate to you why it says that God does it. It strikes me that these causes of tears could not be removed by an angel, could not be taken away by any form of spiritual enjoyment apart from the direct interposition of Almighty God. Think of all these things and wonder over them, and you will recall many other springs of grief which must have flowed freely if Omnipotence had not dried them up completely; then ask how it is that the saints do not weep and do not ] and you cannot get any other answer than this-God has done it in a way unknown to us, for ever taking away from them the power to weep.

**IV.** And now, beloved, SHALL WE BE AMONG THIS HAPPY COMPANY!

Here is the question, and the context enables us to answer it. "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." There is their character. "Therefore are they before the throne of God." The blood is a sacred argument for their being there, the precious blood. Observe, "they washed their robes." It was not merely their feet, their worst parts, but they washed their robes, their best parts. A man's robes are his most honored attire, he puts them on, and he does not mind our seeing his robes. There may be filthiness beneath, but the robes are generally the cleanest of all. But you see they washed even them. Now it is the mark of a Christian that he not only goes to Christ to wash away his black sins, but to wash his duties too. I would not pray a prayer unwashed with Jesu's blood; I would not like a hymn I have sung to go up to heaven except it had first been bathed in blood; if I would desire to be clothed with zeal as with a cloak, yet I must wash the cloak in blood; though I would be sanctified by the Holy Spirit and wear imparted righteousness as a raiment of needlework, yet I must wash even that in blood. What say you, dear friends? have you washed in blood? The meaning of it is, have you trusted in the atoning sacrifice? "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." Have you taken Christ to be your all in all? Are you now depending on him? If so, out of deep distress you shall yet ascend leaning on your Beloved to the throne of God, and to the bliss which awaiteth his chosen. But if not, "there is none other name," there is no other way. Your damnation will be as just as it will be sure. Christ is "the way," but if ye will not tread it ye shall not reach the end; Christ is "the truth," but if you will not believe him, you shall not rejoice; Christ is "the life," but if you will not receive him you shall abide among the dead, and be cast out among the corrupt. From such a doom may the Lord deliver us, and give us a simple confidence in the divine work of the Redeemer, and to him shall be the praise eternally. Amen.

# GOD'S WITNESSES.

NO. 644

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 13TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant, whom I have chosen.”  
— Isaiah 43:10.*

You, most of you, know that I am incessantly engaged every hour in the week either in preaching the gospel or in endeavoring to discharge the multifarious duties connected with this immense Church. Now I always look upon my Saturdays as being consecrated, as far as possible, to meditation and study, that I may find somewhat to set before you on the Lord's-day, but, unfortunately for me, I was served with a subpoena to attend the assizes at Croydon, and was compelled to spend the whole of yesterday sitting in a hot and crowded court. There is a wide difference between the throne of grace and the bench of justice, and between communion with heaven and converse with lawyers and witnesses. I tried to think while sitting there, but I found the business so distracting, that I went home with a headache and thought I should scarcely be able to preach to the assembled crowds on the morrow. It struck me, however, that if I could not preach about anything else, I must just try to get something out of the occupation of yesterday. Perhaps we may glean some profitable ears of corn among such unlikely stubble. Let me draw your attention to the text, and compel my occupation of yesterday to yield a few illustrations to set forth its meaning.

As the text stands, in its connection, we have before us a great assembly. All the nations of the earth are summoned to bring forth their rival gods, and the question to be decided is this, which out of them is the living and true God. The mode of test is this most admirable one—which out of these gods has foretold the future? Among all these votaries of various idols,

which of them can claim that their deity possesses the gift of foresight? Let all the venerated blocks of wood and stone bring forward their witnesses. They can tell of Sibylline oracles, of strange mysterious mutterings which contained doubtful declarations hidden under ambiguous terms. The Lord demands that there shall be presented before this court plain prophecies, distinct declarations of events which could not have been foreseen by human sagacity. In this respect, the gods of the heathen failed, but when Jehovah summoned his people Israel, and put them into the witnessbox, and said to them, "Ye are my witnesses," they were able distinctly to prove that all the great events of their national history had been foretold by their God, and that every one had occurred precisely as foretold. Not one of his prophecies had failed; not one word had dropped to the ground. Surely the Jew might, with great satisfaction, recur to that ancient prophecy which is recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis. We read in the twelfth verse of that chapter that "when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Every descendant of the patriarch could point to this as a revelation given to his great ancestor at a time when such events seemed improbable, and yet it was literally fulfilled. The people went down into Egypt; they stayed there till the four hundred years of this prophecy had been fulfilled; at that very hour they came out of Egypt. With a strong hand and with an outstretched arm did God bring them out; he judged Egypt, with many plagues, and with a terrible overthrow in the Red Sea; but Israel came out with great substance, for we find that they had jewels of silver and jewels of gold. After forty years they found the sin of the original inhabitants of Canaan was full, and that the set time was come for their slaughter and destruction. All this was fulfilled verbatim, and in the eighteenth and following verses there is a continuation of the prophecy, and this too was literally accomplished. "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." And all the inhabitants of the land were

to be destroyed, and Canaan was to be the possession of the descendants of the solitary man who as a stranger and a pilgrim with his God, trod its acres without owning a foot of the soil. This early prophecy was so exactly accomplished that to Israel it was conclusive proof that Jehovah was truly the Lord.

Moreover, the Jews could say that in every national event they had always been forewarned. Was David appointed that his seed should rule over Israel? Jacob long before had seen the scepter in the tribe of Judah. Was the kingdom to be divided at the latter end of the reign of Solomon? Ahijah rends the garment of Jeroboam, and foretells that he shall take ten pieces to make another kingdom for himself. Was the race of Jeroboam to be put away? Remember the terrible words, "There shall not be left so much as a dog of the house of Jeroboam, son of Nebat." Were they to be molested for their sins by the neighboring nations? God always sent to them a warning prophet to bid them repent, lest suddenly they should feel the smarting rod.

Now, what the Jew could say in Isaiah's day, we can say yet more fully. My brethren, it is our happiness to live in an age when expeditions to eastern lands are proving every letter of prophecy. Go ye to Nineveh, and mark her heap, and her solitary river flowing silently to the sea. Did it ever seem likely that Tigris and Euphrates, where the Chaldeans made their boast in their ships, upon whose banks stood the two greatest cities of antiquity, should become the haunt of dragons and owls? Go ye to Nineveh, and learn what God can do, and how he can foresee the desolation of his foes. Cast your eye to the beach of Tyre, where the fisherman spreads his net, and there is not a ship to be seen, where once the commerce of half the world floated in its glory. Tread the silent and deserted halls of Petra, and shiver as you read the words—"The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down. saith the LORD." Where is Moab? What aileth thee, O Ammon? Where are those boastful monarchies, which said "We are ladies for ever: we shall sit upon our thrones and know no sorrow?" Jehovah hath spoken and hath done it: he is God: he only is the God of the whole earth.

This is the scene presented before us in the text-the whole assembled nations, and the Jewish people brought together to prove that in their sacred books they had distinct notification of future events, proving that God is God, since no heathen idols have been able, after this sort, to foresee or to foretell.

We will depart from the precise meaning of the text, and take it in a very truthful sense, though not in the one originally intended. Believers in Christ Jesus, ye take the place of Israel of old, and ye are, every one of you, God's witnesses this day. A great controversy is going on between God and the world. The world puts its witnesses forward to speak in its name; and you, the chosen ones of the Most High, are ordained to this office, to be testifiers and witness-hearers for your God and for his truth. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen."

**I.** We will advance at once to our subject, by mentioning some of THE QUESTIONS UPON WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO GIVE EVIDENCE IN FAVOR OF THEIR GOD.

These questions are the most weighty which can be discussed. One of the first is this: is there such a thing now-a-days as a distinct interposition of God on behalf of man, in answer to believing prayer? To world ridicules the idea. The horse laugh is heard the moment you talk about the efficacy of prayer and faith. "Why," say some, "the wind that drives the pirate on the rock will also cause the shipwreck of a vessel laden with ministers of the gospel. Providence is alike severe in its severities, and alike bountiful in its bounties. The rain falleth upon the field of the wicked, as well as upon the field of the righteous. God has gone away from earth and left it to manage itself- has wound it up like a clock and set it going, and now he does not interfere, but lets each wheel act upon the other wheel, and the whole machinery go on without any interposition from his hand." That is the world's theory. Now, in opposition to this, we hold that, albeit the same event happeneth to the righteous and the wicked, yet still in those very events there are distinct differences in God's dealings. But that is not precisely the question. The question is, whether or not God doth answer prayer and come in to the assistance and deliverance of those who have faith in him. We declare that he does do so. I think, dear friends, if I were to call some of you into the witness box, you would give very clear and distinct proofs of this. Suppose I call Mr. George Muller, of Bristol, He would say, "Look at those three orphan houses, containing no less than

one thousand one hundred and fifty orphan children, who are entirely supported by funds sent to me in answer to prayer. Look,” says he, “at this fact, that when the water was dried up in Bristol, and the water works were not able to serve sufficient to the people, I, with my more than a thousand children dependent upon me, never asked any man for a drop of water, but went on my knees before God, and a farmer who was neither directly nor indirectly asked by me, called at my door the next hour and offered to bring us water; and when he ceased because his supplies were dried up, instead of telling anybody, I went to my God and told him all about it, and another friend offered to let me fetch water from his brook.” He will point you to his report in connection with the orphan houses these many years, and say to you, “Here it is: I solemnly assert that I never told any man one of my wants, but went straight away to err unto my God, and while I have been calling, he has answered me, and while I have yet been speaking, he has sent the reply.” And George Muller is no solitary specimen; we can each of us tell of like events in our own history. Indeed, it were hard for me to find in my life a case in which I have asked and not received. I should find it difficult to discover a season in which I have cried unto God and not received deliverance, during the whole run and tenour of my life. I admit it to be shorter than that of some of you, but yet that short life suffices for me to say, that in hundreds of instances I have had as distinct answers to prayer as if God had thrust his right hand through the blue sky and given right into my lap the bounty which I had sought of him. Now we are not insane; we are not so wonderfully enthusiastic — we wish we were a little more so; many of us are as soldiers’ souls, as commonsense acting men, as any that are to be found. There are brethren here who exhibit a shrewdness in business which would screen them from being called fools by worldlings themselves, and yet our unanimous witness as Christians is this, that we have sought God and he has heard us, and that though we have been brought very low, if we have been enabled to cry out to God, even from the very depths, he has delivered us in our hour of need. Upon this point the Christian should take care that he bears very clear testimony, for he certainly may do it without any difficulty.

There is a question, also, as to the ultimate results of present affliction. The world holds as a theory, that if there be a God, he is very often exceedingly unkind; that he is severe to the best of men, and that some men are the victims of a cruel fate; that they are greatly to be pitied, because they have to suffer much without compensating profit. Now, the Christian holds, first



of all, that the woes of sinners are punishments, and are very different from the chastening sorrows of believers. Of these last he believes that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose. He believes, as a matter of faith, that he gains by his losses; that he gets health by his sicknesses; and that he makes progress towards heaven by that which threatens to drive him back. This, I say, is the doctrine with which he starts. Now what is your testimony, brother Christian, with regard to this as a matter of experience? How have you found it? I must speak for myself, and say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." All of you, who have sounded the deeps of soul-trouble, and have enjoyed the presence of Jesus, can distinctly testify the same. You have found that afterward affliction worketh the comfortable fruits of righteousness, though now, for a season, it is anything but joyous. You have, some of you, passed through very severe difficulties and trials-I have been the sympathizing witness of the griefs of some of you-but I have heard you say, and say it confidently, not in moments of religious excitement, but in times of sober quiet, that you would not have had it otherwise for all the world. I have heard you say, and I know you are ready to repeat it in any company and in any place, that if you could have altered your past life, especially as to its trials and its difficulties, you would not now in looking back upon it have had it altered for a thousand worlds. Oh no, the rough was a right way; the tempest purged the pestilential air; the earthquake shook down houses of evil; the fire consumed heaps of wood, hay, and stubble. In this thing may I beg you always clearly and distinctly to state the truth as witnesses for your God.

A third point very much in dispute is as to the joyfulness of a true believer's life. The world's theory is, that we are a very miserable set of people who take to religion from the necessity of a naturally melancholy disposition. "The gloomy tenets of Calvin," as they are generally called, "the horrid dogmas of Calvin," are supposed to possess congenial charms for minds gloomy and morose. Now what is your testimony, Christian, especially you Christians who have learned to see in "the horrid dogmas of Calvin" the gospel of Jesus Christ? Well, we can say if we be melancholy, joyous people must be very joyful indeed. We sometimes think we have run up as high on the gamut of joy as any human hearts can go, and if we are melancholy, what a deal of joy there must be in the world! What happy people other people must be if we be melancholy! I know that many of

God's saints can say that when they can lay hold upon the great doctrines of sovereign grace they are as happy as the day is long in Midsummer; so that with all their trials they can rejoice in the Lord, and again and again rejoice. I saw a Baptist minister this week who was "passing rich on forty pounds a year" owing no man anything. I told him I hoped he would not die with the secret, for I should like to learn the art of keeping house on forty pounds a year. But he said to me, when I smiled at his salary, "You see before you the happiest man out of heaven;" and I know I did too, for his face showed that he meant what he said. The happiest man out of heaven — a poor Baptist minister on forty pounds a year! Ay, and there are some here who can declare though they are nothing but poor work-girls, and have to stitch, stitch, stitch, far into the night to get their living, yet when they think that Christ is their own Beloved, they are the happiest girls out of heaven. Some of you have not much to spare when the rent is paid and food is bought, yet with all that you want no man's pity, for you are rich to all the intents of bliss. When Mr. Hone, who wrote the "Every-day Book," was travelling through Wales—he was an infidel—he stopped at a cottage to ask for a drink of water, when a little girl said, "Oh yes, sir, I have no doubt mother will give you some milk. Come in." He went in and sat down. The little girl was reading her Bible. Mr. Hone said, "Well, my little girl, you are getting your task?" "No, sir, I am not," she replied, "I am reading the Bible." "Yes," said he, "you are getting your task out of the Bible?" "Oh, no," she replied, "it is no task to read the Bible, I love the Bible." "And why do you love the Bible?" said he. Her simple, childlike answer was, "I thought everybody loved the Bible." She thought full sure it was the greatest treat in all the world, and fancied that everybody else was delighted to read God's Word. Mr. Hone was so touched with the sincerity of that expression, that he read the Bible himself, and instead of being an opponent to the things of God, came to be a friend of divine truth. Let us in the same way show to the people of the world who think our religion to be slavery, that it is a delight and a joy; that it is no more a burden to us to pray than it is for the fish to swim; that it is no more bondage for us to serve God than for a bird to fly. True godliness is our natural element now that we have a new nature given us by the Spirit of God. On that matter be ye witnesses for God.

Another point in dispute refers to the moral tendencies of Christianity, and especially of that form of Christianity which it is our delight to preach. There is a growing belief, now-a-days, that the preaching of the doctrine of

free grace has a tendency to make men think little of sin, and that especially the free invitations of the gospel to the very vilest of sinners, and the declaration that whoso believeth in Jesus shall he saved, has a tendency to make men indulge in the worst of crimes. I read a paper the other day, in which a public writer had the impudence to lay the crimes of Southey and Pritchard, and such men, at the door of our holy religion. I called the writer a villain, and he deserves no better name. He must be a villain, to dare to lay at the door of Christ's holy gospel the infamy of murder. He says that while we continue to preach that God forgives sin so easily, men will sin more and more. Now our testimony is, and we speak positively here, that there can be nothing which exerts so sanctifying an influence upon the heart of man, as the doctrine of the love of God in Christ Jesus. And if ye seek proofs, look around. If it were right for you to speak, my brethren and sisters, there are certain happy ones among us who could testify this day, "We are living manifestations that the grace of God can turn the drunkard into a sober man, and make the harlot a Christian woman, and bring up the depraved and the profane to seek after purity and holiness." Why, we are each of us, in our degree, witnesses to that. When do you hate sin most? Why, at the foot of the cross. And when do you love holiness best? Is it not when you feel that God has blotted out your sins like a cloud. No truth can so subdue the human mind as the majesty of infinite love. It is just that which makes a man hate himself for having offended against so tender and gracious a God. Prove ye by the integrity and uprightness of your characters, that at least the gospel has had a mighty power on you to make you honest, benevolent, devout, loving your neighbor and your God.

Again, it has been whispered-nay, it has been boasted by certain very profound philosophers — that the Christian religion has reached its prime, and though it had an influence upon the world at one time, it is now going down, and we want something a little more juvenile and vigorous, with a fresher vigor in its veins to stir the world and produce noble deeds. I have been told many times, that the simple preaching of the doctrine of grace has no effect now upon the thinking portion of the community, the gentlemen who say this being themselves the thinking portion of the community in their own estimation; for you must understand that, in order to be one of the "thinking portion of the community," it is necessary not to think in a straight line, but to think in a kind of circumubendibus, to think in a style in which nobody else can understand you, to think till you get at the bottom of things, and stir the mud so that you cannot find your own

way and nobody else can see where you are. That is considered to be thinking now-a-days; whereas, it strikes me that the best form of thinking is that which submits itself to God's thoughts, and is willing to sit at the feet of Jesus.

Now is the time, however, for true believers to vindicate the manliness and force of their faith. It is not true that Christianity has lost its force and its power; and we must make this clear as noonday. You are God's witnesses, my brethren; you are put in the box, and I pray you, if in the past or present you have not proved this, do it in the future. The gospel now can nourish heroes as it did of old; it could furnish martyrs to-morrow, if martyrs were required to garnish Smithfield's stakes; it produces now self-denying missionaries; it educates men and women by the thousand who can bear the sneer and the jeer, and who would be prepared to lie in a prison till the moss grew on their eyelids sooner than give up Christ. Our belief is, that Christ has the dew of his youth, and that the gospel is as adapted to the boasted enlightenment of the nineteenth century as to the darkness of the first ages. But you are God's witnesses, and you must prove it, and I must ask every one of you to prove it by the holy zeal, the conspicuous enthusiasm, the sacred fire and fervor that shall blaze and flash in your lives. For truth and for Christ let us teach this world that we retain the old power among us; let us ask the Holy Spirit to enable us to live such forceful vigorous lives, that men shall know once more what we can do. Indeed, I am not boastful in venturing to say that there are still a host of facts to prove that the gospel has not lost its power over the minds of men. We can point to spots in Glasgow, London, Edinburgh, in the most crowded of our cities where once there were dens of infamy and haunts of vice, and there by the enterprising benevolence and the holy perseverance of single, solitary men, the desert has been made to blossom as the rose. But enough of this go ye each man Witness in his own person.

Once again: it is our daily business to be witnesses for God on another question, as to whether or no faith in the blood of Jesus Christ really can give calm and peace to the mind. Our hallowed peace must be proof of that.

The last testimony we shall probably bear will answer the question, whether Christ can help a man to die well or not; whether religion will bear the test of that last solemn article; whether we shall be enabled to go through the river either triumphantly shouting, or quietly accepting our

end. Well, beloved, we will prove that when the time comes; but how many there have been among us whose names we venerate, who have died rejoicing in the love of Jesus. There are those above whom we mention with a joyous sorrow, when we recollect how well to the last they testified of the faithfulness of Christ and his power to bless when all other blessings fail us.

You see, then, that there are many questions in dispute, and that the Christian's business is to be God's witness, speaking the truth for God upon these matters.

**II.** Time flies, and therefore I must take you on to the second point, which is to give SOME SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE MODE OF WITNESSING.

Let me say, as a first suggestion, that you must witness — you must witness if you be a Christian. You may try to shirk it if you will, but you must witness, for you are subpoena: that is to say, you will suffer for it if you do not. Some Christians think they will sneak comfortably into heaven without bearing witness for Christ. I fear they will be mistaken; but this I know, that every Christian who does not come out distinctly and boldly for his Master, will lose all choice enjoyments. He may have enough religion to make him wretched, but he shall have none of the joy and peace, the exhilaration and delight, which a greater boldness and faithfulness would have given him. The bravest Christians are the happiest Christians. Those who serve God most have the most of enjoyment: and those Nicodemites who come to Christ by night, generally find it night. Christian, do not shun witness-bearing for Christ. After the disgraceful defeat of the Romans at the battle of Allia, Rome was sacked, and it seemed as if at any moment the Gauls might take the Capitol. Among the garrison was a young man of the Fabian family, and on a certain day the anniversary of a sacrifice returned, when his family had always offered sacrifice upon the Quirinal Hill. This hill was in the possession of the Gauls; but when the morning dawned, the young man took the sacred utensils of his god, went down from the Capitol, passed through the Gallic sentries, through the main body, up the hill, offered sacrifice, and came back unharmed. It was always told as a wonder among Roman legends. I think this is just what the Christian should do when there is something to be done for Christ: though he be a solitary man in the midst of a thousand opponents, let him at the precise moment when duty calls, fearless of all danger, go straight to the appointed

spot, do his duty, and remember that consequences belong to God, and not to us. I pray God that after this style we may witness for Christ.

In the next place. every witness is required to sneak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Christian, as a witness for God, do this. Speak the truth, but let your life be true as well as your words. Live so that you need not be afraid to have the shutters taken down, that men may look right through your actions. You are not true if you have any sinister motive, or anything to conceal. Speak in your life the truth, and let it be the whole truth too. Tell out for God all the truth as it is in Jesus, and let your life proclaim the whole teaching of truth. Let it be nothing but the truth. I am afraid many Christians tell a great deal which is not true: their life is contrary to their words; and though they speak truth with their lips, they speak falsehoods with their hands. Suppose, for instance, I draw a miserable face, and I say, "God's people are a blessed people," nobody believes me, because my face tells falsehood while my mouth utters a truth; and if I say, "Yes, religion has a sanctifying influence upon its professors and possessors," and put my hand into my neighbour's pocket in any sort of way, who will believe my testimony? I may have spoken the truth, but I am also speaking something that is not the truth, and I am thus rendering my witness of very small effect.

When the witness is before the court, his direct evidence is always the best. If a man can only say, "I heard somebody say," the judge will frequently stop him, and say, "We do not want hearsay evidence; what did you see?" Many professing Christians only give witness of what they have read in books; they have no vital, experimental acquaintance with the things of God. Now remember, dear friends, that secondhand Christianity is one of the worst things in the world. We do not like it as we see it in the Church of England; we do not believe that sponsorial salvation in which one man promises for another that he shall keep all God's holy commandments, to be anything better than a lying pretense. The same is true of any form of religion which you may happen to have, which you borrow from your mother, or take from your father, or gather from good books. True religion is more than what we can teach or learn; it is something that must be known and felt; and your witness for God is not worth the words in which you utter it, unless it comes from your own experience of its truth.

A witness must take care not to damage his own case. How many professed witnesses for God make very telling witnesses the other way.

They damage their case by either retaining a part of truth, or else by flatly contradicting, as we have said before, in their lives what they have professed. Do not let it be so. As a witness for God be careful that every action tells for his glory; ay, and that every thought, and word, and deed, shall be such witnessing as you shall wish to have borne in the day when the great Judge shall call you to account.

Every witness must expect to be cross-examined. "He that is first in his own cause," says Solomon, "seemeth just; but his neighbor cometh and searcheth him." You know how a counsel takes a man and turns him inside out, and though he was one color before, he looks quite another directly afterwards. Now you, as God's witnesses, will be cross-examined. Watch, therefore, carefully watch. Temptation will be put in your way: the devil will cross-examine you. You say you love God; he will set carnal joys before you, and see whether you cannot be decoyed from your love to God. You said, you trusted in your heavenly Father: providence will cross-examine you. A trial will dash upon you. How now? Can you trust him? You said, religion was a joyous thing; a crushing misfortune will befall you. How now? Can you now rejoice when the fig tree does not blossom, and the flocks are cut off, and the cattle are dead? Can you now rejoice in God as aforetime? By this species of examination true men will be made manifest, but the deceiver will be detected. What cross-examinations did the martyrs go through! What fiery questions had they to answer! What cutting cross-examinations were the sword, the rack, the spear, the prison, the banishment, and yet you know how faithfully they witnessed, still standing fast to the truth even to the end. What a noble sight is Martin Luther when under trial. His friends said to him, "Luther, you will never think of going to Worms, will you? Why the cardinal will burn you as they did John Huss." "Ah," said he, "but if they were to make a fire so big, that it would reach from Wurtemberg to Worms and should flame up to heaven, in the Lord's name I would go through it to declare the truth of God before the council. I would enter between the jaws of Behemoth; I would break his teeth, and would confess Jesus Christ." Thus Luther was proved to be the true man of God, and his witness for God moved the world in his own time, and is moving it now. May we all be able to stand the test of such cross-examinations.

**III.** Did you observe in the text, dear friends, that THERE IS ANOTHER WITNESS BESIDE YOU.

“Ye are my witnesses, and my servant whom I have chosen.” Who is that? Why the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want an exposition of who this servant is, turn to the Philippians and read these words: “Who took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Witnesses for God are not solitary. When they seem alone, there is one with them whom Nebuchadnezzar saw in the fiery furnace with the three holy children:

“The fourth is like unto the Son of God.” “Fear not,” Christ may well say to all his faithful witnesses, “I am with you, the faithful and true witness.”

Let us remark, concerning Christ’s life, that he witnessed the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If you want to have a witness to every attribute of God, only read the four Evangelists, and there you have it. Beloved, would you see God’s truth? Observe how Jesus Christ, in all his actions, with a sacred simplicity, with a transparent sincerity, writes his heart out in his every act. Here you have no sophistry, no jesuitical reservation: he lives out in his life his own heart, and the heart of God. What testimony you have to God’s holiness in the life of Christ. In him was no sin. “The Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.” Read that divine Book, “The Life of Christ,” through, and through, and through; you shall find nothing to be put at the end by way of addenda, much less anything by way of errata. It is all there, and there is nothing there but what ought to be.

What witness-bearing, too, there is in the life of Christ to divine justice. See him sweating great drops of blood, mark his face marred with a multitude of sorrows, see his brow crowned with thorns, decked with ruby drops of his own blood, read in his hands and in his feet the terrible writing of divine vengeance, hook into his side and see there the sacred mystery of God’s hatred for sin, a hatred so deep that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him not because of sin! Never could there be a clearer witness than the bleeding Jesus, of God’s hatred to sin.

Above all, read Christ’s witness to God’s love. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” In every action of the life of Jesus, from the time when he lay in Bethlehem’s manger to the moment when a cloud received him out of their sight, it is all love. Elias brings fire from heaven to destroy, Christ sends it in Pentecost to bless. He opens his mouth at the first with—” Blessed,



blessed, blessed;" for so he multiplied that word on the Mount where he preached his first sermon, and he closed his earthly sojourn by blessing his people. His paths dropped fatness. No imagination can picture love more deep and pure than that which is reflected in the life of Jesus Christ.

I cannot, however, detain you this morning, to show that the entire circumference of divine excellence is contained in the life of Christ, that every pearl of deity is in the crown which we call Jesus; that he containeth in himself a full declaration of all that the Father is, so that his words are true—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Brethren and sisters, you are to be witnesses for Christ, and Christ is to be a witness with you. If you want to know how to discharge your duty, look at him, he is always witnessing. By the well of Samaria, and the Temple of Jerusalem; by the lake of Gennesaret, or on the mountain's brow. He is witnessing night and day; his mighty prayers are as vocal to God as his daily services. He witnesses under all circumstances; scribes and Pharisees cannot shut his mouth; that fox, Herod, cannot frighten or alarm him; even before Pilate he witnesses a good confession, he witnesses so clearly and distinctly that there is no mistaking him. The common people heard him gladly, for this among other reasons, that no dark, unintelligible jargon concealed his meaning.

Beloved, make your lives clear. Be you as the brook wherein you may see every stone at the bottom-not as the muddy creek, of which you only see the surface-but clear and transparent, so that your heart's love to God and man may be distinctly visible to all. You need not tell men that you love them: make them feel that you love them. You need not say "I am true:" be true. Boast not of integrity, but be upright. So shall your testimony be such that men cannot help seeing it. Let me beg of you never for fear of feeble man to restrain your witness. Never put the finger of shame after this style to your lips. Those lips have been warmed with a coal from off the divine altar; let them speak like heaven-touched lips, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand." Watch not the clouds; consult not the wind; in season and out of season still witness for the Lord, the Savior, and if it shall ever come to pass that for Christ's sake and the gospel you shall have to be like Naphthali, a people that hazarded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field, then blush not, but rejoice in the honor thins conferred upon you, that you are counted worthy to suffer loss for Christ's sake, for now your sufferings shall be a pulpit to you, your

losses and persecutions shall make you a platform, from which the more vigorously and with greater power you shall proclaim your witness for Christ Jesus. Gird up your loins, my brethren, and go out from this assembly saying, "Am I God's witness? Then, Lord, open my lips that I may speak with decision and power, and give me grace that my witness-bearing shall be such that I shall not be ashamed when the reporting angel shall read the whole of it before assembled worlds." The Holy Ghost is wanted for this: may he dwell in you and make your bodies his temple, and so make each of us to witness for Christ.

Remember, this sermon has nothing to do with many of you. You cannot witness for Christ, for you do not know him. You cannot witness for him till you have trusted him. O you who are out of Christ, let my witness to you this morning be this, that except ye seek him ye must perish, but that if ye seek him he will be found of you. May the Lord give you to find him now, and his shall be the glory. Amen.

# THE BLIND MAN'S EARNEST CRIES.

NO. 645

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 20TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” — Mark 10:47, 48.

WHEREVER Jesus Christ is found, his presence is marvellously mighty. The disciples, when Christ was absent, were like sheep without a shepherd, they were foiled in argument, and even defeated in attempted miracles; but as soon as our Savior made his appearance among them, they returned to their wonted strength. When a valiant general suddenly hastens to the rescue of his routed troops, the dash of his horse-hoofs reassures the trembling, and the sound of his voice transforms each coward into a hero. May the glorious Captain of our salvation show himself in the midst of our Churches, and there will be a joyous shout along our ranks. You will have no need to exchange ministers, or to wish for a better class of Christians; the same officers, and the same soldiers will suffice to win splendid victories. If Jesus be present, the men will be so changed, that you will scarcely know them; they shall be filled with power from on high, and do great exploits in his name and by his strength. Nor does the divine energy of his presence confine itself to those who are already disciples of the Savior; but strangers, neighbors, wayfarers, and even blind beggars feel the effect of his nearness. This sightless mendicant hears the good news that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by, and straightway he begins to pray. My brethren, there shall be no lack of praying hearts where there is a present

Savior. If there be no conversions in the congregation, it must be because Christ is not dwelling there by his Spirit. Ye have grieved him, and he is gone; ye have forgotten him, and he has left you, that you may prove your own weakness, and learn to glorify his power in future. If the Lord shall graciously return to his Church, cries of penitents will be frequent, and the songs of those who have found peace by faith in him, shall go up to heaven in blessed chorus. Oh! that the Lord Jesus would appear among the Churches of this our age! We have much to mourn over. Infidelity audaciously seats itself in the chief seats of the synagogue. Romanism secretly eats out the very vitals of our national religion. Latitudinarianism acts as a moth upon gospel doctrine; inconsistency of life dishonors the profession of practical godliness. O Lord, how long, how long! If the Lord Jesus shall graciously work by his Spirit among us, we shall soon have our languishing churches revived; errors will fly, as the bats and owls betake themselves to their hiding-places when the sun ariseth; and every sweet flower of Christian grace shall yield its blessed perfume under the genial influences of his celestial rays. I thank God we have had Jesus here. We have often been able to say, "The Son of David passeth by." He is here still. Believing hearts who recognize his presence, and lament when he is absent, tell us that they often find him sweetly manifested to them here in the preaching of the Word, in breaking of bread, and in the fellowship of prayer. He is here now; but oh! we want to recognize his presence more fully; we want to see the divine influences, like streams from Lebanon, fertilizing all our garden. We desire to see Jesus working more effectually in making poor sinners feel their need of him, and drawing them to himself.

Providence at all times co-works with grace in the salvation of the chosen people. You have an instance of it here. It was providence which brought the blind man where grace brought Jesus Christ. The Lord might have been passing by, but if this blind man had not happened to live at Jericho, or if at that particular moment he had not been pursuing his avocation of begging just in the particular road along which the Savior marched, he would never have heard that Jesus passed by, consequently would never have cried out to him, and never have obtained the necessary cure. Providence brings sinners under the hearing of the Word, and moves the preacher to select topics suitable to their minds. Providence prepares them, as the plough prepares the soil, and grace guides the minister's mind to act as the hand which throws the wheat broadcast over the field. I am thankful for many of you that you are here this morning, for I know that "Jesus passeth by;" and

though it may be that you are still without the heavenly light, it is a circumstance for which you ought to thank God, that many have here received sight from the Lord Jesus. It may be a singular providence which induced you to come here at all — I pray it may prove to be the white horse on which Christ rideth forth, conquering and to conquer, that he may win a victory in your souls now. Permit me, however, to remind you that such a circumstance involves responsibility. Jesus passeth by — the blind man sits by the wayside — if he doth not cry his blindness will henceforth be wilful; and there will be an addition to all its gloom in the thought that he did not use the one means within his reach, namely, that of crying to the physician for healing. Remember your responsibility, anxious sinner, and ask God to give you grace now to improve the flying hour, and may his Spirit lead you to imitate the example of the blind man, and cry, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!”

**I.** Coming directly to the case before us, let us observe THE BLIND MAN’S EARNESTNESS AS A CONTRAST with the behavior of many hearers of the Word

It was a very short sermon that was preached to him. He heard that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. He heard nothing more. I do not know that he understood doctrine, that he precisely knew what Jesus Christ came into the world for. He could not have explained the system of theology. He had never had a clear and distinct statement of grace laid down before him. All he had heard was, that “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.” But that short sermon led him to prayer. Beloved, what a contrast between him and some of you! You have been sermonized until you must well nigh be sermon-weary. You have heard the truth till probably, in theory, there are none better instructed than you are. You know the precious doctrines of truth so far as the killing letter is concerned, but you have never yet been led to pray; or, if the prayer has come, it has never been that earnest, heaven-piercing cry which will not be refused: “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” has not been the passionate prayer of your spirit. How many there are who listen to me so often that I fear I shall never be God’s instrument of salvation to them. It is so easy for you to get used to one voice, till that which once was shrill as the note of a clarion, becomes like the buzzing of a bee in your ears; you weary of it, you sleep under it as a miller sleeps while his mill is going, because it makes no sound to which he is not accustomed. My figures and illustrations you have heard; my tones of pleading you well know; my words of exhortation you can probably repeat

by heart; and some of you are no more affected by twelve years of earnest effort than a piece of marble might be affected by twelve years of pouring oil along its hard unmelting surface.

It is a melancholy reflection, that instead of praying over sermons many disport themselves with them: that which costs us many a prayer and many a tear is of no further worth to them than as giving an opportunity for exhibiting their critical abilities, I have not to complain of any hard criticisms from you; you kindly approve of my poorest endeavors, and accept my feeblest words; I almost wish that some of you did not. Oh, that you would but kick against the truth! I might have some hopes of you, but alas for that indifferentism which makes you receive it all as matter of course, and praise the style, and say you are thankful that the preacher is bold and honest with you, and thus the whole thing ends in your having complimented me without having sought my Master's favor. Oh, my hearer, we have something else to seek beside your good words. If you would hate us, we could not regret it if you would but love your own souls; but if you love us, and listen to our voice with respect, but nevertheless choose the downward path and go on to your own destruction, how can the preacher be content? Shall he go to his bed, and remember that hundreds of you will dwell in everlasting burnings, and can never have a portion among the glorified spirits in heaven, can he go to his bed and say, "It does not matter, they are pleased with me, and I am unto them as one that maketh a sweet sound upon a goodly instrument?" Oh, I would God that instead of this you were brought like this poor blind man to go from hearing to praying, from your pews to your closets, from listening to me to communing with God, and seeking mercy at his hands.

You will say that you cannot fairly be classed in this category, for under the preaching of the Word you have been led occasionally to pray. Yes, and I do remember well when I myself was led to pray by hearing the Word. But what of it? The prayers of Sunday were forgotten in the sins of Monday, and the anxieties of the Sabbath were dissipated in the pleasures of the week. It is so with some of you. You pray when a sermon has been especially earnest; when the arrows of God wound you, you weep, and you promise amendment and a thousand fine things, and you even dream of flying to Christ, and taking hold upon the horns of the blood-besprinkled altar; but yet it is not done. You have made resolutions enough to pave the road to hell therewith, you have piled up enough of your own professions to condemn you to an everlasting insolvency for bills dishonored and for

debts unpaid. Oh, would God ye had done with resolving and re-resolving, with these transient and temporary feelings! and oh, that these things would go right through your heart, leaving such wounds as none but Christ is able to heal! Oh, for the effectual work of God the Holy Ghost! What is the value of the cloud of the morning which flies before the gale, or the smoke of the chimney which is gone with the first puff? For eternity, you want something more lasting than the morning dew, something more substantial than chimney's smoke. O may the divine Spirit build you with his own right hand upon that good foundation, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The blind beggar, with but one sermon, and that exceedingly brief, never leaves off praying till Christ grants him his desire: may God give you also to pray in earnest, lest you be sent to hell in earnest.

This poor man began to cry for himself, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me?" and we cannot bring men to hear for themselves. They will say, "I hope that sermon which was so appropriate to my friend will have a beneficial effect on him." You will think of those in the opposite gallery; your hearts will remember some sitting down below. Oh, mind yourselves! yourselves! yourselves! Another man's salvation is of course desirable, but what will it be to thee that he should be in Abraham's bosom, if thou art with the rich man in the flames? Thine own soul is that which thou hast to look to first. Self-preservation is a law of nature; be not disobedient to it! May grace put such force into it, that from this day thou wilt say, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" I confess to you that I could not read this passage without feeling the deepest and most humiliating feeling, to think that the mere report should have been so blessed to that man, and that year after year we should have given forth a much more full report of Christ Jesus, and yet have to say of many of you "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" I would God I could lay this more to my heart, and that you laid it more to your hearts, for, after all, it is more your concern than mine whether you are saved or not. The preacher is responsible for the faithfulness of his preaching, but hearers also are responsible for the earnestness of their hearing, and God grant that your responsibility may not prove to be a millstone about your necks, to sink you to the nethermost hell.

**II.** Passing onwards, we notice this man's intense DESIRE AS AN ABSORBING PASSION.

There are many excuses which men make for themselves why they should not seek their soul's salvation just now. A very common one is, "I am a very poor man. Religion is for the gentle-folks, for people that have time to spare, but it is of no use to a working man." This person was a beggar. His position in life was far less honorable than yours; but, though a beggar, he desired that his eyes might be opened. And you, who are superior in your position to him, ought not to make the lowness of your estate an excuse for not seeking the salvation of your souls. Where did that lie first come from — the lie that the religion of Christ is not for the poor? Is it because so many of our sanctuaries are gorgeous in architecture? Is it because it is usual on the Sunday, and very properly so, for people to put on their best clothes? And does the working man think that therefore he would not be welcome because he happens to be out of work, or has not a good suit of black to put on? Then, by all means in the world let us break down this prejudice, and show to the working man that he is welcome here. I have often noticed you give a seat to a navigator or to a laborer in a smock frock when you have left very respectable people to stand in the aisles, and I do not blame you for it; well-dressed people may be less fatigued than those who have been toiling all the week; I admire the choice you make, because I hope it will go to prove that the working man is not a speckled bird among us. Why, it is all nonsense because we see a congregation well and respectably dressed to think that they must all necessarily belong to the upper classes. A certain preacher said to me the other day, "You preach to the rich, I preach to the poor." Now this was from want of knowing better. We have, I am happy to say, some rich among us, whose princely gifts enable us to do much for the Lord's work; but still our great multitude is made up of the genuine working class. They are not a canting, whining set, who will go about begging of every body, and therefore dress shabbily; no, they are sober, saving people, and therefore, for the most part, lift themselves out of the ditch of absolute poverty into manly independence. The religion of Christ not for the poor man! Why, above all men, these are those that want it; and while the religion of Christ appeals to all ranks, if there be ever a preference given at all, it is the boast of the gospel of Christ, that "the poor have the gospel preached to them." Now have I the ear of any man who has talked in that way, and said, "It is all very well for gentlemen, and so on?" Now do not go and say that again, because you know it is not true. You know it is not true. We can give you thousands of instances where the religion of Jesus Christ blesses the cottage as much as ever it could bless the palace, and is found quite as useful to the laborer



who has to toil from morning to night as to “My lady,” who has next to nothing to do if she does not do something in the cause of Jesus Christ. Now get. rid of that excuse.

Well, but this beggar might have said, “I must stick to my business.” His business was begging, and though Jesus Christ might he passing by, he might very reasonably have said, “I really have no time to attend to this gentleman, whoever he may be. His preaching may be all very well and good, but I must beg right on, for when I get home there is little enough in my hat, and I really cannot afford the time to attend to this gentleman.” That is what many people say: — “Really our business occupies all our time. We have to be always at it, early in the morning, almost before the sun is risen, and late at night till we are much too tired to read a book or to pray.” Ah, but you see this man forgot his begging to find his eyesight; and you might well forget your trading to find your soul’s sight; if it were worth while to neglect his begging to have his eyes opened, it were worth while even if it were necessary to neglect your business if you might but find Christ; though, mark you, I do not believe that any man need neglect his lawful calling on account of religion.

Bartimaeus might have said, “I cannot attend to Jesus Christ now, for it is the height of the season.” You see a beggar’s season always is when plenty of people are about, and as Jesus had brought a crowd with him, he might very justly have said, “Why, if I do not beg now, it is of no use begging at any other time, I have a call of Providence to stick to my begging just now. I must attend to getting my eyes opened, if they can be opened, at some future time; but just now, I must make hay while the sun shines.” This is your style of talking. “See! I am so very busy just now; providence has put a good thing in my way, and I must stick to it. I cannot be supposed to go out week nights to hear sermons, and I cannot spare time for prayer. I want every moment that I can possibly get, to make money, for now is my time. When I get old, and can get a house in the country, I may then rest and attend to divine things.” Ah! thou simpleton! here is a man who flings away the golden opportunity of gleaning money of the multitudes to seek his sight, and yet thou art such a simpleton that thou wilt not leave thy gains to think of thine eternal state.

He might have made yet other excuses if he would. For instance, he might have said, “Well, suppose I do get my eyes opened, then I shall not be so well fitted for my trade as I now am:” for a blind beggar gets twice as

much as a man who can see; and it is rather a qualification to a beggar to have no eyes. Some of you feel, "If I had my soul saved, I could not trade as I now do. I know I should have to shut up that gin palace. I could not be the nurse of drunkenness, and yet call myself a Christian." "I could not stand at that bar," said a young woman to me who had been serving at one of the gin-palaces, "the Lord had met with me, I did serve a few nights, but I could not stand it. I could not serve glasses of gin, and then go to the communion table — that would never do." There are some who are afraid to think about religion, because it will disqualify them for their business: and a blessed disqualification too — the Lord disqualify thousands for the accursed work. But oh! if this man could well give up his poor trade of beggary to pray for his eyes, you may well give up your wicked trade if your souls may but enter heaven. If ye should lose all the world, ye have lost next to nothing if ye have gained eternity.

I wonder this man did not make the well-known excuse, "I do not know whether I am predestinated to have my eyes opened; because if I am to have my eyes opened, they will be opened, and if I am not to have my eyes opened, they will not be opened. So I shall sit still here, and hold my hat and beg. That is the main chance! I shall hold my hat, and stick to my trade!" I do think that every man who uses this last excuse, knows within himself that he is talking nonsense. I cannot believe in a rational man standing upright, and saying, "If I am to be saved, I shall be saved, and therefore I shall not pray." I believe that man is a sneak; he is trying to make himself believe what he knows is not true. He knows very well that he does not say that kind of thing in business: "If I am to make twenty pounds, I shall make twenty pounds, and so I shall not take down the shutters to-morrow. If I am to have a harvest, I shall have a harvest, and so I shall not plough this year." He never does anything of the kind ordinarily, and yet he pretends he is such an idiot that he must throw away his soul because of the doctrine of predestination. Brethren, if a man means to hang himself, he can always find a piece of rope; and if a man means to damn himself, he can always find an excuse; and this excuse about predestination is one to which those run who are greater fools or knaves than ordinary. This man made no excuse of any sort whatever about his family, or his trade, or predestination, but he just cried out with vehemence, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

**III.** We turn now to NOTICE HIS VEHEMENCE, and observe that it was A MOST REASONABLE ZEAL.

It appears, according to the Greek, that this man had a good voice, or, at least, made the most of it. He did not sit and whisper, "Thou Son of David have mercy on me;" but he shouted, and, as the opposition increased, his shouts grew yet more loud, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." He was vehement and persevering in his prayer, but he was justified in his zeal. He was blind and he knew the misery of blindness. There are unutterable woes connected with it, and it needs much grace to make a man contented when his eye is closed to the light of day. This poor soul could not be content while there was a chance of a cure. But yours, sinner, is spiritual blindness, the blindness which does not let you see yourself or see your Savior, the blindness which shuts out all spiritual joys from your eyes, and will shut out the joys of heaven eternally from you, and condemn you to wander hopelessly in the blackness of darkness for ever. However awfully earnest your prayers may be, they cannot be too earnest. He was a beggar, and had doubtless learned the weakness of man. He had often gone home with nothing when he had expected that his bag would be filled. And you, too, you are a beggar; you have tried your own works and found them fail; you have begged at the door of ceremonies and you have found them to be an empty show; you have trusted first to one thing of man's invention and then another, but after all your begging you still need a heavenly alms to make you rich; you are naked, and poor and miserable. Now, considering the weakness of man, and that Christ alone has power to save you, if your prayer should become as terribly earnest even as the shrieks of lost souls, it would be fully justified, for yours is an urgent pressing case. He knew, moreover, that Jesus Christ was near, and when Jesus Christ is near there is much cause for earnest prayer. If Jesus would not hear, if it were not a season of mercy, if grace were not being distributed plentifully, you might be excused praying; but oh! when it is a season of revival, when you are in the place where Jesus does bless souls, when you listen to the ministry which God has honored, then let your cry be more vehement than ever it has been. This poor man felt it was now or never with him. If he did not get his eyes opened that day they might never be opened. Christ was passing by then and he might never pass that way again. Oh, sinner! it may be now or never with you. I know that God saves men at the eleventh hour, but I know also that there are many who are not saved at the eleventh hour, and that after such-and-such an hour has struck, many are given up to hardness of heart, permitted to be their own destroyers, without any checks of conscience or of the Holy Spirit — and such may be your case. The ticking of the clock always cries to men who know how to

interpret its meaning. "Now, or never! Now, or never! To-day on earth, to-morrow in eternity!" If thou wouldst have Christ, the only time to seek him is to-day. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "For now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." This the beggar felt, and therefore, up went the cry louder and yet more loud, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." He guessed at least something of the value of sight. He had heard what others told him of the happiness of gazing upon the landscape, the field, the flood, the sky. He longed to look into the face of friendship, and to know his own parent or his own child by sight. Well might he, if he guessed the value of his eyesight, cry most mightily. Sinner! thou hast at least a guess of the happiness of pardon. Thou hast at least some idea of the sweetness of justification. Thou knowest, for thou hast often been told, that eternal life is well worth thy seeking. Oh, man, may the Holy Ghost stir thy heart this morning, till thou canst no longer restrain the cry, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." I say, if you think of the dreadfulness of his present state, of the hope which the presence of Christ afforded him, and of the blessedness which he might expect from a restored eyesight, he had good reasons for being vehement: and, sinner, if thou wilt think of the wrath of God abiding on thee now, of the future with all its array of terror, and if thou wilt remember the power of Christ to save, and the eternal blessedness of being safe in him, all these things, and especially the shortness of time and the present necessity of thy case, should move thee to cry yet more and more earnestly, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

**IV.** Let us pass on to a fourth point: THIS MAN EXPERIENCED CHECKS IN HIS PRAYER, and this is a very common affliction.

John Bunyan tells us, that hard by the wicket gate, Diabolus had a castle, and from this castle he used to shoot at all who sought an entrance. Moreover, he kept a big dog, which did always bark and howl, and seek to devour every person that knocked at the gate of mercy. I am sure that is true. When ever a sinner gets to mercy's gate and begins knocking, that noise is heard in hell, and straightway the devil endeavors to drive the poor wretch away from the gate of hope. In the olden times, when the Algerian pirates took many Christian prisoners, they chained them to the oars of their galleys to row their masters. When Christian ships of war were seen in the distance, the captives knew that there was a hope of their being liberated; but their masters would come on deck, and cry, "Pull for your lives," and the whip was laid on to make these poor captives fly by their

efforts from their own rescue. This is what the devil does. He gets sinners to tug at the oar, and whenever Christ with his blood — red flag of liberty is seen within hail, the sinner exerts himself to the utmost to get out of Christ's way. If that does not suffice, Satan will employ sometimes bad men and sometimes good men to stop the sinner from seeking a Savior at all. You know the ways in which the world will try to make a crying sinner hold his peace. The world will tell him that he is crying out about a matter that does not signify, for the book is not true, there is no God, no heaven, no hell, no hereafter. But if God has set you crying, sinner, I know you will not be stopped with that; you will cry yet the more exceedingly, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Then the world will try pleasure, you will be invited to the theater, you will be attracted from one ballroom to another; but if the Lord put the cry in your mouth, the intense anguish of your spirit will not be satisfied by the noise of viols, nor by the shouts of them that make merry. Perhaps the world will call you a fool to be vexed about such things; you are melancholy and have got the mopes. They will tell you that you will soon go where many others have gone to Bedlam; but if once God has made you cry, you will not be stopped by a fool's laughter; the agonizing prayer will go up in secret, "Have mercy on me." Perhaps the world will try its cares. You will be called into more business; you will get a prosperity which will not make your soul prosper; and so it will be hoped by Satan that you will forget Christ, in accumulated wealth and growing cares. But ah! if this be such a cry as I hope it is, poor anxious sinner, thou wilt not be stopped by that. Then the world will affect to look down upon you with pity. Ah, poor creature, you are being misled, when you are being led to Christ and to heaven. They will say you have become the dupe of some fanatic, when, in truth, you are now coming to your senses, and estimating eternal things at their proper value. Ay, but the worst is that even the disciples of Christ will act as these did in this narrative — they will charge you to "hold your peace." Some professors have no sympathy with anxious souls. Much mischief is done by the light and frothy conversation of Christian professors, especially on the Sabbath-day. How often sermons are blunted by a spirit of cavilling, I have heard of a woman who prayed for her husband's conversion very earnestly, and one day, after sermon, as she was walking home she was speaking to her friend, and pulling the sermon to pieces, the doctrine did not quite suit her taste; and her husband looked at her with wonder; that sermon had broken his heart and yet here was a woman cavilling at the very truth which God had blessed to give her the desire of her heart. I do not doubt that Christian

people, by their unprofitable criticisms upon ministrations which God has blessed, may mar the good work, and be the instruments in the hands of Satan of urging poor sinners to cease their cry. But oh, poor soul, let neither saint nor sinner make thee stop. If thou hast begun to pray, though thou hast cried for months, and no sweet answer of mercy has come, cry more loudly! Oh, be yet more earnest! Take the gates of heaven and shake them with thy vehemence, as though thou wouldst pull them up post and bar and all. Stand at Mercy's door, and take no denial. Knock, and knock, and knock again, as though thou wouldst shake the very spheres, but what thou wouldst obtain an answer to thy cries. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Cold prayers never win God's ear. Draw thy bow with thy full strength, if thou wouldst send thy arrow up so high as heaven. He whom God has taught to be resolved to be saved will be saved. He that will not take damnation as his fate, but who feels he must have Christ, is already under the divine operation of the Eternal Spirit; such a man bears the marks of divine election upon his very brow; such a man must and shall obtain everlasting salvation.

**V.** I come to the closing point. This MAN'S IMPORTUNITY AT LAST BECAME SO MIGHTY, THAT REBUFFS BECAME ARGUMENTS WITH HIM.

"He cried the more a great deal." He took the weapons out of their hands and used them on his own account. What do you suppose were the arguments that they used to induce him to leave off praying? Would not one of them say, "Hold your tongue! You ragged, filthy beggar, hold your tongue!" "That is why I will not hold my tongue," says he. "I am such a poor loathsome object that I have need to cry. You gentlemen that are better off have no need to cry as I have; but the worse you prove me to be, the more need I have of the Master's help, and therefore I shall cry the more." The devil says to you, "Do not pray, you are such a sinner." Tell the devil that is the reason why you will pray, for being so black, and foul and filthy, these are all arguments why you above all other men should cry aloud, "Jesus, have mercy on me." Then they said, "Why, you have nothing to recommend you. Jesus Christ has not invited you; he has never looked on you with an eye of love, he has never called you." "Then it is the very reason," said he, "why I should call him. If I have no love-token, then so much the worse for me, and so much the more reason why I should never be happy till I get one. If he has not invited me, then I will cry to him for an invitation.' You see the more you can prove that the sinner's ease is hopeless and bad, you have only proved that the sinner has the more reason

for prayer. If I am the furthest from hope, why then he who wants to be heard, and is a very long way off, must call loudly; he that is further still, must call more loudly still; and he that is furthest off, must be the loudest of all; so if I am the furthest off from God and hope, I will only pray with the greater importunity till I do prevail. "Ay, but," said another of them, "you make such a noise. Be still! you disturb the whole neighborhood." "Ah," says he, "I am thankful for that, for now he will hear me." Methinks this man, if he had heard the Savior tell the parable about the woman whose perpetual coming wearied the Judge, must have said, "Make a noise, do I? So much the better; then I will make more, for I see I tease you, perhaps I shall weary him, so I will even keep on till the Judge is drawn to grant my request by the very noise I make." Some tell you, you should not be so earnest; why, you really disturb your friends; you have got to be so concerned about your soul that your friends are concerned about your sanity. Tell them you are glad of it and you mean to be more earnest, for if you have made hard-hearted men feel, you will soon make God, who bids us give him no rest, at last give you the desire of your heart. Then they would say to him, "Now, do not disturb the Savior, he is so busy, he has so much to do. He is preaching now; he is talking to his disciples." "Ah, well," says he, "then if he does so many good things, the more reason why I should cry that he would do me a good turn also." It is of no use to ask a man to give anything who never gives anything, but the man who is always giving always will give; and so from Christ's many works he derives a reason why he should cry. "Is he blessing others, then why not me?" So, dear hearer, when you hear of showers of blessings ask that they may fall on you, and when you know that Christ is saving so many make that a reason why he should save you, even you. Then they said, "He is on a journey, he is going to Jerusalem, he cannot be stopped by every beggar. Hold your tongue! When do you think he will ever get there if he is to turn aside to every clamorous mendicant who chooses to urge his claim?" "Travelling! is he," said he, "then I will stop him now, for if I once let him go by I shall never catch him again. Going to Jerusalem to die! Ah, then my hope will be all over, I have him now, I will not give him a chance of going by." Louder goes up the cry, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." If the devil tells you "It is too late!" then say, "I will go directly, I will not stop; if so many years have passed over my head without my finding a Savior, then every one of these shall be a spur to make me fly like the wind, more swiftly." It is very likely that they also said to him, "How dare you, a beggar, interrupt such a person as Jesus Christ? Why, he is going in

triumph through Jerusalem. He is to ride with solemn pomp all through the streets. What can you be at, thinking that you are to have an audience with such a great one as he is?" "Great one! is he?" the man seemed to say. "Great one! I want a great one! a little one will not serve my turn. It must be a great one that can open my eyes, and the greater he is the more reason why I should cry to him." So whenever you are alarmed at the glory and greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ, do not be put back because of that, but rather say, "Is he mighty? then he is mighty to save. Is he a Savior and a great one? then he is just such a Savior as I want. I will never rest, I will never pause till he saith unto my soul 'I am thy salvation.'" Now I did solemnly ask of God that he would this morning excite in some sinner a desire to pray, and that if there were one here who had been praying and who was tempted to leave off, the Word might be blessed by God the Holy Spirit to make him more incessant in his prayer. O may he grant my petition.

Remember, that the only way in which this praying and this waiting will come to an end, is by looking alone to Jesus Christ. If you turn that eye of yours away from yourself and your feelings and your prayers to Jesus Christ's finished work, and trust him, you will find peace directly. There is peace to the soul that looks alone to Jesus. While I have been exhorting you to pray, and I meant to do it earnestly, more earnestly than I have been able to do it, I did not wish you to put praying in the place of believing. If thou canst not as yet understand Christ so as to rest on him, if thou canst not as yet cast thyself on him, then pray for more enlightenment, pray to be led to faith, pray that faith may be given thee; but O may God give thee the power and the will now, even now, to exert a living faith upon the crucified Savior, for there is "life in a look at the crucified One." Praying will ultimately bring you to that point, but I pray God to bring you to it now through his mighty Spirit, and so like Bartimaeus, may we receive our sight and follow Jesus in the way, and to Jesus be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.



# IN WHOM ART THOU TRUSTING?

NO. 646

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Now on whom dost thou trust?” — Isaiah 36:5.*

THAT question may not be without importance in matters of ordinary life. We have all to trust our fellows, more or less, and I suppose we have all had to smart in some degree, as the result of it. We may trust the mass of men in trifles without any serious consequences; but when it comes to large sums, when the whole of a man's fortune, for instance, is staked upon the character and reputation of someone else, then it is not altogether an unimportant question, “On whom dost thou trust?” Oh, many have rested on some choice friend, and found him play the Judas! How often have our dearest counsellors turned away from us as Ahithophel did from David! How frequently have we confidently rested upon the integrity, friendship, and fidelity of some person whom we thought we knew and could trust, and we have found that “Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.” Be cautious, my brethren — perhaps you need not that I should say this to you — but use discretion in all your transactions in life, as to how far you will trust the sons of men; or else this may be whispered in your ear, and may send you to your bed with a heavy heart. “Now on whom dost thou trust?” But, surely, if this be important in temporal matters, it is overwhelmingly so in regard to spiritual things. If I become a bankrupt in trade, I may yet set up in business and retrieve my fortune; but in soul-matters, if I once make bankruptcy in the commerce of life, there is no hope of my receiving a fresh certificate and attempting to retrieve my losses. Here, if a general be defeated in some great battle, he may yet possibly retreat in such good order, and again get together his troops so as to win another battle, and turn the current of the campaign; but once be beaten in the great life-struggle, once feel that sin has utterly got the

mastery over you, and that there is no hope here, and die so; and there is no more contest possible, you are vanquished; the battle is fought, and the victory is lost for ever. Let us, then, be very much concerned, dear friends, to enquire, and to give an honest answer to the question, "On whom dost thou trust?"

First, let us go round the congregation and collect a little bundle of answers; then, secondly, let us hear the christian's answer, and when we have listened to it, let us give the Christian some few words of advice with regard to what his line of action ought to be, seeing he has such an one to trust to.

**I.** First, then, let us put this question, and collect, I say, A LITTLE BUNDLE OF ANSWERS, "On whom dost thou trust?"

I think I hear some answer, "I do not know that I have thought about the matter at all. You ask me 'On whom dost thou trust?' I shall have to say, I have left the matter of dying, and of eternity, and of judgment, out of my consideration; I hope it is a long time before I shall die, and there is no need to trouble myself before it is necessary, and, therefore, I put the matter off. I feel it is an unpleasant task to make too much enquiry, and, therefore, I have just left well alone. I cannot give you an answer, for I have not considered the matter." My dear friend, do not you think that you are very foolish? Do you forget that you may die this very moment, that there are more gates to death than you dream of; that there is a gate to death, ay! and to hell, too, from the place where you are now sitting? Have you never heard of persons falling dead in the street, of bowing down as Sisera did, of whom it is said, "Where he bowed himself there he fell down dead"? Have you a lease of your life? Are you certain that death is so far off? Have not you walked with dying men? I have. I have talked with them one day, and I have heard the next that they were in eternity. We shall hear the same of you. And is it wise to be trifling with these things as though you knew that you had fifty or sixty years more to live? And suppose you were sure of a long life, would you wish to delay being happy? Do you desire to postpone being made supremely comfortable? Remember, that to have your soul-affairs set right in a proper manner, is to obtain present joy and happiness. I do not think that young people ever say, "We are too young to enjoy ourselves; let us wait till we grow older, and then let us be happy," and yet to be saved is to enjoy yourselves in the most emphatic sense of that term, and to find Christ precious is to be happy beyond all

expression. Wherefore postpone that which is more pleasant than pleasure itself, and more sweet than honey dropping from the honeycomb? I pray you, dear friends, do think of this matter now, because you may have to think of it when it will only bring you bitterness and grief. That is a dreadful verse, where Christ says of the rich man in hell, "He lift up his eyes." Poor soul, why didst thou not lift up thine eyes before? It is too late, for ah! thou canst see as thou lookest up Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, and thyself with a great gulf fixed, dividing thee from him. It is too late for thee to look about thee now, for there is nothing to see but the consuming flames, and the tormentors who are to be thy perpetual companions, with that dark despair, which, like a great gravestone, is to be for ever on thy heart. O, why didst thou not lift up thine eyes before? Surely the only answer I can get from this poor wretch is, "Tell my brethren that they come not into this place of torment, and ask them to lift up their eyes now, and to begin now to consider what shall be their confidence, and what the ground of their hope with regard to eternal things." Careless sinner, I wish that those few words might be blessed to thee. I would look thee in the face and conjure thee by the living God, by life, by death, by judgment, by eternity, by heaven, by hell, by everything that has power to move a rational being; set thy house in order, and consider thy latter end, and if thou hast no trust as yet, God help thee to find one.

Well, we will try again and put the question to another. "On whom dost thou trust?" And I hear one stand up and say, "I thank God I am about as good as most people; I do not know that I have any particular cause to worry myself. If everybody's life had been like mine, sir, it would be much better for their day and generation. I have never been a gross and open sinner; I have been a man who has set a good example to his family, and brought them up well. When the hospital wanted a guinea, I put my hand into my pocket and did not bring it out empty; when my poor neighbors have needed charity, they have never found a churl in me. I hope I can say it will go well with me, and if it does not, sir, it will go badly with a good many." My friend, with that last sentence I perfectly agree: I am afraid it will go badly with a great many; but I do not see what consolation you ought to get out of that, for company in being ruined will not decrease, but rather increase the catastrophe. Let me say to you that it proves that the sum and the substance of your confidence is, that you are trusting in yourself. Now do you really and honestly think that you are of yourself sufficient to carry your soul through all the pangs and terrors of death, and

to bring yourself by your own merit safe to God's right hand? I think your conscience can remind you of some slips and some flaws: your memory must tell you of some sins, if they are not of the grosser kind, yet of some sins, and let me say to you remember that God has revealed in his own Word this truth, that if any man will be saved by his own works there is one condition which cannot be altered, namely, that he must be an absolutely perfect man: he must never have even sinned so much as once; he must never have had a sinful thought in his heart, or word on his tongue, or act in his entire life, or else he is guilty of a breach of the whole law. Now what say you to that? This is no mere assertion of mine; this is God's own Word, and let me give you another passage, "By the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified." O proud man, dost thou think there was any need for Christ to die to save us, if we could save ourselves? What, dost thou think that God's servants have to say, "The righteous are scarcely saved;" and do you who believe in no Savior, think it such a simple thing to get to heaven that you are going there by your own good deeds? I counsel thee (I would thou wouldst take my advice), do with thy good works just as the Ephesians did with their magical books: bring them out and burn all of them, for they will never do you good, and they may do you infinite mischief, and come, my good friends, come as you are, to that Savior who has opened a new and living way, by his own precious blood, and who can do for you what these fine boastings of yours can only pretend to accomplish. He can save your guilty soul from the wrath to come.

I do not suppose that I should get from anybody present this answer, which has come no doubt from the lips of very many, "On whom do I trust? Why, I trust in my priest; he has been regularly ordained; he belongs to an Apostolic Church; he tells me that he will forgive my sins if I confess them to him, and that when I come to die he will give me my viaticum; he will grease my boots for the last journey, and send me off in such a state that the devil himself cannot hold me with this anointing oil upon me. If I cannot trust to a priest, where can I fix my confidence?" I can give you an answer to that last enquiry, where can you trust; but let me appeal to any man of sense who is here to-night, and who may have been relying upon a priest — What is there in any man, though he be six foot of clay, that you should put your trust in him. No doubt there have been some mystical incantations performed upon him, but in this nineteenth century are you such a fool as to believe that he has any grace to spare for you? If you

would read the Scriptures, dear friend — only your priest does not care that you should do this, except it be his own version which he has well doctored before you get it — if you read the Bible, you will find that if you are a follower of Christ, you are as much a priest as he can be, that one man is as much a priest as another when he believes in Jesus; for, according to Scripture, all saints are a “royal priesthood.” As for myself, though I preach in this place the word of God, I hate the very thought and name of priest, and I wonder how it can be that persons calling themselves Evangelical clergymen can talk of themselves as priests. Priests, indeed, I fear many of them are, but I wonder at the effrontery which should make them take the name and wear it. Priests! Great God! There is but one priest before thy throne who can offer acceptable sacrifice, and that is thy dear Son, who offers himself for ever as a great sacrifice unto thee; and as for us, we are but secondary priests under him, and here none of us has any superiority over his brother, for all the saints are made in Christ Jesus kings and priests unto God, and they shall reign with him for ever and ever. Do not he misled, dear’ friend, your priest might as well trust in you as you trust in him.

But it is probable, very probable, that I should get another answer’ if I were to put this question round. Perhaps a considerable number’ of people would say, “Well, God is merciful. He is not so severe as to be unkind towards us, and we dare say, though we may have a good many faults, yet as he is a very good and a very gracious God, he will forgive us our sins and accept us.” Then it seems, dear friend,, that you are trusting in the mercy of God. Let me say to you that as you state it, you are trusting in what you will never find. If you were very generous, and there were a number of poor people in the city, and you were determined to feed them with bread, and you therefore issued an order that they were all to call at your son’s house, and that there they might have as much bread as they pleased: if they all declared that they would have nothing to do with your son, would not go to his house, would sooner starve than go, and if they all came clamouring to your door, what would you say to them? You would say, “There is bread enough and to spare: I have provided it, my son will give it to you, but if you insult me to my face by telling me that you will not have what I freely give to you because of the way in which I present it, you may go without it.” And this certainly is how God will deal with you. He has treasured up all his mercy in the person of his own dear Son, and there it is — come and welcome. And it is said, that “Whosoever cometh”

to Jesus Christ “shall in no wise be cast out;” but, if you go to God out of Christ, you will find him to be a consuming fire; and instead of mercy you shall receive justice, and that justice will smite you to the lowest hell. What, shall the King of heaven leave his throne and lay aside his crown, take off his azure mantle, put on the garments of a man, become poor and needy, live in poverty, and die in shame, and yet will you not take grace through such a channel as this? Shall God ordain this better than golden pipe, through which the crystal stream of love and mercy shall run; and do you disdain this pipe? Shall God say that he has treasured up in Christ Jesus all the fullness of the Godhead, and will you turn from Christ, and say, “‘We will not have this man to reign over us?’” Then know this, that the King sits upon his holy hilt of Zion, and he will dash you in pieces like a potter’s vessel, because you said, “‘Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast his cords from us.’” Rather let me bid you bow the knee, and kiss the Son. Cling to Jesus, and then,

*“Come, and welcome, sinner come.”*

Come through Jesus, for in God there is no mercy to those who come leaving Christ behind them.

There is only one other answer which I think it is likely I should get to-night, and it might be I should have this: “Well, sir, I do not say that I can trust to my works, but I am a good-hearted man; I am a man of good intentions, and though I have a great many faults, yet, sir, I am good-hearted at bottom, and I think God will look at my heart, and he will put me right at the end, notwithstanding my slips and wanderings by the way.” Well, my dear friend, it is very well for you to say you have got a good heart, you know, but we have nobody to prove it except yourself. That is a very silly thing which people say of men when they die, “Oh, he was rather bad in his life, and loose in his morals, but he was a good-hearted man at bottom.” It reminds me of Rowland Hill’s saying, “Yes, but when you go to market to buy apples, and you see a number of rotten ones at the top, if the market-woman says, ‘Oh, never mind, it is only the rotten apples at the top, they are very good at bottom,’ you will say to her, ‘My good soul, I will be bound to say the best are on the top, and they will not improve as you go down, for generally they will get far worse.’” And so if a man is rotten at the top, bad on the surface, I cannot tell how much worse he may be down below. It is said there was a man who used to swear and drink, who, nevertheless, applied for membership with Mr. Hill, and gave this

reason for it, that though he did drink occasionally and frequently swear, yet he was good at bottom. Mr. Hill said, "Then you think I am going grovelling down through the dirty foul filth of your life to get the little good that is somewhere at the bottom of you! Why, sir," he says, "it will not pay for the risk of digging out, and I am not going to do it." And there is much truth in that saying, "If it is bad at top it is worse at bottom, and if it is not good on the surface it will never pay for getting at it." It will turn out, I am afraid, to be a delusion and a snare. Do not rest in that. If you will not be angry, I will tell you what your heart is; your heart—you that have such good hearts — your heart, I say, is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. In your breast there are what you little think of — envy, lust, enmities, and murders. All manner of unclean things are housed and caged within your breast. Do not talk about its goodness any more, for when you do, you give God the lie, and how can you expect to go to the heaven where God is, when you are thus insulting him all the while?

**II.** Well, we have done with these poor answers, and we will come now to THE CHRISTIAN'S ANSWER.

"On whom dost thou trust?" "I trust," says the Christian, "a triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I trust the Father, believing that he has chosen me from before the foundations of the world; I trust him as my father, to care for me, to provide for me in Providence, to teach me, to guide me, to feed me, to correct me if need be, and to bring it home to his own house where the many mansions are. I trust the Son. Very God of very God is he — the man Christ Jesus. I trust in him to take away all my sins, for he suffered their penalty upon the cross; I trust him to put all those sins away for ever by his own sacrifice. I trust him to wrap me about with his perfect righteousness, and to adorn me with all his excellencies. I know him to be my intercessor — so often us I pray to present my prayers and desires before his Father's throne. I believe him to be my resurrection and my life, that, though I die, yet I may live again. I expect him to be my advocate at the last great assize, to plead my cause, and to stand there to justify me. I trust him with all that I have, having no merit of my own, no confidence in my own tears, or prayers, or preachings, or willings, or doings, or believings — I trust him, for what he is, what he has done, what he has promised yet to do — I rely on him, the incarnate Son of God." "And next," says the Christian, "I trust the Holy Spirit; he has begun to save me from my inbred sins; I trust him to drive them all out; I trust him to curb my temper, to subdue my will, to enlighten my understanding, to

check my passions, to comfort my despondence, to help my weakness, to illuminate my darkness. I trust the Holy Spirit to dwell in me as my life, to reign in me as my king, to sanctify me wholly, spirit, soul, and body, and then to take me up to dwell with the saints in light for ever. Thus I trust a triune God through the man-mediator, Christ Jesus.

And now, dear friends, there is much difference between the Christian's trust, you will plainly see, and the trust of other men, but to some men this does not look like a real trust. "Why, we cannot see God," says one. "How do we know all this about the Trinity? We can neither see, nor hear, nor feel God. Is this a real trust?" Cannot you trust in a thousand things you have never seen or heard. You take, I believe, bank notes, and yet you never saw the person who signed them or who issued them; there are a thousands things in this world which are real grounds of confidence, and yet you never saw them. Some of you, perhaps, may be earning your living by electricity, you are engaged in telegraphic operations and you believe in electricity, but you never saw it. Every builder trusts in gravity, every engineer in the world has to put his confidence in the law of gravitation, and yet nobody ever saw this mighty power, but the thing is just as true as though one could see it. Those that have trusted in God find him to be as real as if they could see him. Though unperceived by sense, they find that when they get to Him, whom they cannot see, they get to one who is more substantial than things which are seen, which are temporal, for the things which are not seen are eternal. Some have said, "But does God interfere to help his people? Is the trust you impose in him so really recognised by him that you can distinctly prove that he helps you?" Yes, we can, though God has never wrought a miracle for me; yet he has done what I thought only a miracle could accomplish, and he has wrought it in the common order of Providence; and you shall find the same if you trust him with all your heart. He will hear your prayer, and listen to your cry, and deliver you out of deep waters, and from bitter anguish; and though the depths will not be divided, fire will not cease to burn, nor will lion's mouths be closed, yet you shall be as well delivered as if miracles were still the order of the day. A Christian is sometimes asked whether he has a right to trust 'God? I have no business to rely upon one of you to do something for me merely because I choose to trust you to do it; I must have your promise before I am wise in my confidence. Now, the Christian has God's promise for it. He believes that Bible to be God's book, and, therefore, when he finds God saying anything in that book to him, he believes it to be true, and he even



finds it to be so. God has promised his people that, if they trust him, they shall lack no good thing. He invites them to trust, nay, he commands them to trust; and, therefore, brethren, the Christian is justified in venturing to put his confidence in his God. But the worldling wants to know whether God is worthy to be trusted; and the Christian can say, "Ay, that he is. Our fathers trusted in him, and they were not confounded: we have trusted in him, and we have never found him fail." If I knew anything amiss of my God to-night, I would honestly tell it; but I know nothing but this, that he is faithful and true. I rest with my whole soul upon the finished work of Christ, and I have not found anything yet that leads me to suspect I am resting where I shall meet with a failure. No, the older one grows, the more one gets convinced that he who leans by faith on Christ, rests where he never needs to be afraid. He may go and return in peace and confidence, for the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but God shall not change, and his purpose shall not cease to stand. Yes, God is worthy of our confidence.

And I think we can say, also, by way of commending our God to others, that we feel we can rest upon him for the future. 'We have been in strange places, and in very peculiar conditions in the past, but we never were thrown where we could not find in God all we needed; and we are therefore encouraged to believe that when death's dark night shall come, with all its gathering of terror, we shall fear no evil, for the same God will be with us to be our succor and our stay. The Isle of Man has for its coat-of-arms three legs, and turn them which way you will, you know they always stand; and such is the believer — throw him which way you will, he finds something to stand on; throw him into death, or into life, into the lion's den, or into the whale's belly, cast him into fire, or into water, the Christian still trusts in his God, and finds him a very present help in time of trouble. "On whom dost thou trust?" We can answer boldly, "We trust in him whose power will never be exhausted, whose love will never cease, whose kindness will never change, whose faithfulness will never be sullied, whose wisdom will never be nonplussed, and whose perfect goodness never can know a diminution."

**III.** Well now, if this be true, I am to close with SOME WORDS OF ADVICE TO THOSE WHO ARE SO TRUSTING.

They are first of all, drive out all unbelief Dear brothers and sisters, if we have such a God to trust to, let us trust with all our might, and let us

endeavor to get rid of those horrible doubts and fears which so ranch mar our comfort. Why should we fear, my brethren? “Oh, ye of little faith, wherefore do ye doubt?” “Oh,” says one, “I do doubt, but I can hardly tell why.” Well, if your God be such an one as he really is, it is an insult to him to doubt him. We say of a rogue, we will trust him as far as we can see him, and some people hardly give their God better measure than that. We never ought to count a man dishonest till we find him out in some trick. Now you have never found out your God to be untrue; then do not doubt him till you have. Give him your trust till he proves unworthy of it. Let us repent for our hard thoughts of God. I know you said you would he starved, but you are not starved yet. You said you should go to the workhouse, but you are not there yet; you said you should die of a broken heart, but you have not died yet, you have a smiling face to-night. You told your friend you could never get through that trouble, yet you have got through it and fifty worse troubles than that; you said you would rather die than live, yet you did live; you have not died and you do not want to die. Now why give God a bad name? When the devil calls God a liar I can understand it, but it is hard of a man’s own child to think ill of his father. I think it would cut me to the heart if my child could not trust me, and oh how ungenerous, how unkind on your part — no, I will say on my part, on our part, that we cannot put more confidence in this kind generous Father of ours who has never failed us, and who never will. Come let us not doubt him again. David does not appear to have made any very lengthy trial of the mighty sword of the giant Goliath, and yet he said “There is none like unto it.” He had tried it once in the hour of his youthful victory, and it had proved itself to be of the right metal, amid therefore he is able to praise it for ever after; he has no doubt about the keenness of the edge, or fineness of the tempering; even so, my brethren, let us speak well of our God, there is none like unto him in the heavens above or the earth beneath; “to whom can you liken me, or shall I be equal saith the Lord.” You may search the world around and you will find that there is no rock like unto the rock of Jacob, our enemies themselves being judges. So far from suffering any doubt to live in our hearts, we will take them all, as Elijah did the prophets of Baal, and slay them over the brook, and as our stream to kill them at we will select the sacred torrent which wells forth from our Savior’s wounded side. My brethren, we are verily guilty in speaking hard things of our God. When the children of Israel were come to the borders of the promised land, and sent out spies to search it, and see what the prospect was, and how to prepare for the future occupation of it, ten of the men on their return gave

an ill report of the country which God had sworn to give unto his people. Now, what was the punishment which was inflicted on them for this evil speech concerning God's gift? Why, they died by the plague before the Lord, and thus God proved his anger and wrath against their sin. Happy is it for us that he does not thus visit our evil words and hard thoughts concerning himself. We have often brought up an ill report of our God when we ought to have praised him without ceasing for all his loving-kindness towards us the sons of men. Brethren, let us give up all repining and fretful speaking.

*“Were half the breath thus vainly spent  
To heaven in supplication sent,  
Our cheerful song would oft’ner be,  
‘Hear what the Lord has done for me.’”*

Try this plan of turning all your complaints into prayers, and soon we shall hear you singing, —

*“O magnify the Lord with me,  
With me exalt his name,  
When in distress, to him I called,  
He to my rescue came.*

*O make but trial of his love;  
Experience will decide,  
How blest are they, and only they,  
Who in His truth confide.”*

And then, brethren, let us seek the Holy Spirit's help in this matter. We have often said we would not doubt again, yet we have. Let us ask to be strengthened. We often forget that the author of our faith must be the finisher of it also. It is well even to keep in mind the fact that our faith is like the lamp which was burning in the temple, and never allowed to go out; but it had to be daily replenished with fresh oil. Our faith is an immortal flame, but only so, because God keeps it burning, and he expects us to feed the flame by all possible means, and above all to ask him to give it the oil of grace through the means we employ for that purpose. Foolish virgins we shall prove, if we do not secure this needed sustenance for our lamps. I am sure that many Christians are to blame for their own trials and afflictions of spirit, through dark doubts and unbelief. I know that there is a devil, and that he will seek to flood your fields, and make the fair garden a desolation and a mass of mud and corruption; but I know also, that many

Christians leave open the sluice gates themselves, and let in their own deluge through carelessness and want of prayer to God, to guard and protect them. I know that Satan will try to keep your soul in darkness and gloom, but it is very often your own fault if he succeeds. Walk out into the beams which come from the sun of righteousness, stand in the light of God's reconciled countenance, come to the brightness of the shekinah which covers the mercy-seat, and all the powers of darkness, led on by the master fiend of hell, cannot cast a cloud or shadow over the joy and peace of your believing. Of course you will feel the shafts of the foe, if you forsake the shelter of the high tower into which the righteous run and are safe. Confide, then, the custody of your soul to the good Spirit, who is the Comforter, and who will preserve you from those evils which will arise, if you think that you can to your own keeper.

Furthermore, let us try to bring others to trust where we have trusted.

When a man finds something that is good and safe, he likes to recommend it to his friends: let us speak well of God to all our neighbors; let us tell them, whenever we get an opportunity, that God does not leave his people, that he is not a wilderness unto his chosen, and it may be that God will bless our testimony to the bringing in of others. I have often mused on that account of our Lord's first disciples, where it is written, that Jesus welcomed to his house two of John's disciples, and, "One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Jesus, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." Then further on, we find our Lord saying to Philip, "Follow me." What was the result? "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." No sooner do these men truly believe in Christ as the long-promised Messiah, than they call all others to Christ, that they may also believe upon him and become his disciples. So also with the woman of Samaria, she leaves her water-pot and goes into the city, and says, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?" Now, with the selfsame spirit, we should be moved to go and proclaim to others the grace and goodness of the Lord our God. When men engage in that perilous and foolhardy amusement, scaling the summits of ice-covered mountains, for no other reason than to be able to say that no one ever risked breaking his neck on that spot of the universe before they were foolish enough to lead the way, how do they climb up these almost

inaccessible peaks? Why, one man cuts the steps first with his axe, and mounting up, gives a hand to the next, and he puts his feet where the other has trodden, and so they aid each other. And thus it is that we should ascend heavenward, mount higher and higher yourself, ascending daily, and as you ascend, cut steps for others and help them up, that together you may mount to the skies. If you were overtaken by a deluge, as sometimes happens in the lowlands of Australia, what should you think of doing first of all? Would you not make for the nearest hill, and climb to the summit, and get your family and goods, if possible, safe out of the waters on to that hill-top, by your side? Yes, but if you are a man, in the highest acceptation of the word, you would not rest content with that, you would try to rescue your neighbor, and his family, and cattle; yea, everything that was in danger or within reach of the flood, would be, if possible, saved by you, and landed in safety by the side of your own property. Such is life; a flood of unbelief is abroad, “get you up into the high mountain,” and lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid, “cry aloud and spare not,” but proclaim far and wide that there is a refuge here for all who wish to flee from the wrath to come. I think many of us, when we first were seeking the face of an offended God, vowed that if ever we were saved, we would seek to warn others also, and save them from being lost. Did we not say,

*“Then will I tell to sinners round,  
What a dear Savior I have found,  
I’ll point to his redeeming blood,  
And cry, ‘Behold, the way to God.’”*

Begin then now, to keep your promise; warn all men, and say to each with all your heart and soul,

*“O, be earnest, do not stay!  
Thou mayest perish e’en to day,  
Rise, thou lost one, rise and flee;  
Lo! thy Savior waits for thee.”*

And if, again, we are trusting in God, let us love him who thus gives himself to be trusted in by us. No man can truly trust God who does not love him. The sister graces ever live together. They have but one address, for they all live in one home. Whenever there is faith, there love also dwells, and each grace takes up its residence likewise. Some are packed away into cellars or up in garrets by many Christians, so that they are often not seen, and you would fancy that they were not at home when you

called. I know that the chain of graces is unbroken even when some links are unseen. God has sown the seeds of all the graces and they will eventually in the garden of the heart, all spring up and he to the glory of his name. What I want is, that you should stir up the good thing which is in you. Bring it out to the front and make it to appear. Show your love. If it is as a spark hid in the midst of a heap of refuse, clear out the evil matter, fan the spark into aflame, add fuel to it till you shall be all on a blaze with love to God. Nothing short of this will satisfy God, anything else is wrong and should not for one moment be tolerated by us. What! shall I hope for a heaven through the grace of God in Christ? Am I expecting deliverance from ten thousand ills here and from hell hereafter. Do I trust the Most High for all temporal and spiritual good, and am I aware that I deserve not the least of all the many mercies I am receiving to-day, and hope to receive in days to come? Do I nevertheless cultivate no love to this loving God, this bounteous benefactor? Then I am one of the basest and most sinful of men because of my heartlessness and vile ingratitude.

*“A very wretch Lord I should prove  
Had I no love to thee;  
Rather than not my Savior love,  
Oh let me cease to be.”*

And yet another thought before I conclude. — We must prove our faith by our works.

We must labor for the Lord in whom we are trusting: all must see that this is only right and fitting. What have we received, and why have we been made the recipients of these mercies? Is it not that we may go and do to others as God has done to us? O God, dost thou carry my burden, and shall not I carry thine? O Christ, dost thou not carry the cross for me, and shall I not carry the cross for thee? O my Father, dost thou, as it were, lay thyself down, and become a stone for me to build on, and shall not I desire to be built on thee, that I may help others to rest on thee likewise? Christian men and brethren, let us do more for God. As we find him more and more worthy of our trust, let us launch out into fresh fields of labor, let us seek each day to labor for God, as the poet saith,

*“No day without a deed.”*

So let us have no day without doing something, by which we may advance the honor of the glorious name of our God. We are bound to leave our affairs in God's hand, and then instead of being idlers and loiterers, we are

to go and work in his vineyard as long as it is called today. In this way we can prove our love and show our gratitude, but here let me also call your attention to what is one sure way of augmenting your faith, and increasing your spiritual health, it is this — constant hard working for the Lord your God. Cease working, and you will soon cease believing. You will best secure the constant joy and peace of believing, by living near to God, and, like the Savior when on earth, always being “about your Father’s business.” Love him as you trust him, work for him as you love him, grow like him as you work for him, and you shall soon come to be with him as you are like him, and his shall be the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

*“Though faint, yet pursuing, we go on our way,  
The Lord is our leader, his word is our stay;  
Though suffering, and sorrow, and trial be near,  
Our God is our refuge, and whom can we fear?”*

*He raiseth the fallen, he cheereth the faint;  
The weak and oppressed — He will hear their complaint;  
The way may be weary, and thorny the road,  
But how can we falter? our help is in God!*

*Though clouds may surround us, our God is our light;  
Though storms rage around us, our God is our might;  
So faint, yet pursuing, still onward we come;  
The Lord is our leader, and heaven is our home!”*

# HEART'S-EASE.

NO. 647

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 27TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”  
— Psalm 112:7.*

THE last month has been a peculiarly gloomy season. Evil tidings have followed on one another's heels like Job's messengers. Epidemics have been rampant among our families, and many are the early graves which have been filled by contagious diseases. It is greatly to be feared that the cholera is stretching its wings of death, and hastening to find its prey in our crowded lanes and alleys. The murrain among the cattle is cutting off the herd from the stall, and polluting the most substantial food of man; and it is much to be feared that the continual showers must be spoiling much of the uncared corn, and causing serious loss to farmers in the more northern counties.

In the newspapers of the last few weeks there has been a constant succession of the most fearful crimes. Scarcely have we known a period in which persons disposed to be melancholy might more thoroughly indulge their taste for the darkest apprehensions and forebodings. Cheerful as I am, I could in some degree sympathize with a good old saint, with whom I sat a few minutes the other night, when he began to lament our national sins, and tremble at the presence of what he conceived to be national judgments. Though I am very far from being troubled with uneasy forecastings, yet I freely admit that old age and long experience may justly suggest to us earnest searchings of heart because of the ills of the present period.

More terrible than rumor of plague or murrain, is the manifest fact that Popery is advancing among us with giant strides. Turn which way we will, Popery-Romish or Anglican-reeks in our nostrils. It is no longer engaged in



secretly undermining our bulwarks, it has set its ladder to the wall, and is scaling the ramparts. The Popish party in the Establishment, supported by the undoubted superstition of the National Prayer-book, now seeks to regain its ancient prominence; while its allies without are moving heaven and earth to win this nation to the dominion of Antichrist. Meanwhile, there are numerous causes for mourning in the Church of God itself-many defections, many departing from first principles and fundamental doctrines, and some, who did run well, suddenly turning aside, and proving that they had never run in the power and energy of the Spirit of God. If one preferred the night side of life, one might sit down and readily gather congenial shades of cloud and mist about one's head and heart. But what would this avail? Despondency wins no victories. Let us pluck up courage, and go to our knees and to our God. Those who have laid hold on Christ Jesus, and are resting in the Father's love and power, have no reason to be disquieted: should all hell be unmuzzled, and all earth be unhinged, they may rejoice with a joy undamped by carnal fear or earthly sorrow. They have found a secret source of supply, from which they can draw, if all earth's wells should suddenly run dry; for all their fresh springs are in their God. Of each believer, when full of faith, it is true, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

**I.** To come directly to the text. EVIL TIDINGS MAY COME TO THE BEST OF MEN-to those whose hearts are fixed and are trusting in the Lord.

It may be of great service to us to remember this dreary fact, for it may lead us to set loose by earthly things. Let us chew this very bitter morsel for a moment or two: there is nothing very palatable or pleasant in the recollection that we are not above the shafts of adversity, but it may humble us and prevent our boasting with the Psalmist, "My mountain standeth firm: I shall never be moved." It may stay us from taking too deep root in this soil, from which we are so soon to be transplanted into the heavenly garden.

**1.** Let us remember the frail tenure upon which we hold our temporal mercies: how soon may evil tidings come concerning them. We rightly class our families first in our possessions. We look with delight into the faces of our children; we mark their growing abilities; we are charmed with evidences of opening intelligence-yet they may never live to manhood, their sun may go down ere it is yet noon. We are, perhaps, perplexed as to what we shall do with them when they shall be old enough to be apprenticed to a

trade, or initiated into a profession—we may never have that task to care for; long before they reach that period of life, they may be slumbering in their graves. We gaze with ever-fresh delight upon those beloved ones with whom we are united in the ties of wedlock, but if we gaze wisely, we shall clearly see mortality written upon the fairest brow, and glistening in the most loving eye. How soon may these partners of our hearts' best affections be rent away from us! We must beware of making idols of those who are nearest and dearest, for the objects of our idolatry may soon, like the golden calf, be dashed in pieces, and we may have to drink the waters of bitterness because of our sin. If we would remember that all the trees of earth are marked with the woodman's axe, we should not be so ready to build our nests in them. We should love, but we should love with the love which expects death, and which reckons upon separations. Our dear relations are but loaned to us, and the hour when we must return them to the lender's hand may be even at the door.

The like is certainly true of our worldly goods. Do not riches take to themselves wings and fly away? And though we have heard some almost profanely say that they have clipped the wings of their riches, so that they cannot fly, yet may the bird of prey rend them where they are, and the rotting carcase of the wealth which the owners cannot enjoy, may be a perpetual curse to them. Full often gold and silver canker in the coffer, and fret the soul of their claimant. God can do with us as with Israel: "While the meat was yet in their mouths. the curse of God came upon them." What substance have we beneath the skies? Is not what we call substance a mere shadow soon departing? Your good, substantial ship has often returned from her voyage to enrich her owner, and just now she flies before a favoring gale; but there are storms. and hurricanes, and sunken reefs, and quicksands, and who knows how soon your promising venture and the vessel which bears it may sink into the briny sea. There stands your house—it is full of merchandize upon which, with but a fair profit, great wealth may be obtained; but a fire may come, and there may happen to be no insurance, or by a change of market profit may wither into loss. Your present prosperity may soon be turned into distress by the failure of some larger house, the dishonoring of heavy bills, a breach of credit, or an unexpected drain of capital. How often have enterprizes high as the tower of Babel, suddenly rocked, and reeled, and fallen in total ruin. This world at best is but a sandy foundation, and the wisest builder may well look for an end to the most substantial of its erections.

Evil tidings may also come to us in another respect: we may suddenly find our health decay. That strength which now enables us to perform our daily business with delight, may so fail us that the slightest exertion may cause us pain. Although unconscious of so sad a fact, we may be even now fostering within our bodies the disease which is destined to stretch us upon the bed of sickness. We should be prepared for the days of darkness, for they are many. The day of sickness would not overtake us as a thief, if we were wise enough to remember that we are dust. Frail flowers of the field, we must not reckon upon blooming for ever. Spring lasts not all the year, the time of the sere and yellow leaf must come, and the frosts of winter must nip our root. Wherefore should I suppose that I am to enjoy an immunity from the common ills of mankind? Am I not among those who are born of woman, and is it not written that all such are “of few days, and full of trouble?” Do not the “sparks fly upward” from my hearth? and wherefore, then, should I suppose that I am not “born to trouble” like the rest of my race? It were well for us if we would remember that there is a time appointed for weakness and sickness; then we should be more thankful for the privilege of going up to the Lord’s house, since the day cometh when we can no longer go up to Zion’s hill. While we can serve God, let us recollect that the time may come when we shall rather have to bear than to do; when we can only glorify him by suffering, and not by earnest activity. Be it ours to live while we live, and snatch the present moment out of the jaws of time, and while the evil days come not, nor the days draw nigh in which we shall say, we have no pleasure in them, let us serve God with both our hands, and spend and be spent in his service. There is no single point in which we can hope to escape from the sharp arrows of affliction. The fondest hope which you and I have cherished may yet drop like the fruit of the tree before it is ripe, smitten at the core by a secret worm. Set not your affections upon things of earth: set your whole heart upon things above, for here the rust corrupteth, and the moth devoureth, and the thief breaketh through, but there all joys are perpetual and eternal. What is there here after all but cloud-land? Why seek we to be lords of acres of mere mist? What are earth’s treasures but vapor; will you heap up for yourself haze and fog? Cloud and mist will pass away, and if these be your riches, how poverty-stricken will you be when you can carry none of these airy riches into the land of solid wealth. Christian, remember well the insecurity of all earthly things, and be content to have it so.

Certain expositors refer this passage to slander and reproach, and they translate it, "He shall not be afraid of evil hearing." It is one of the sharpest trials of the Christian's life to be misunderstood, misrepresented, and belied, but any man who will serve his master well must make up his mind to endure much of this affliction. The more prominent you are in Christ's service, the more certain are you to be the butt of calumny. I have long ago said farewell to my character; I lost it in the earlier days of my ministry by being a little more zealous than suited a slumbering age, and I have never been able to regain it except in the sight of him who judgeth all the earth, and in the hearts of those who love me for my work's sake. Beloved fellow-laborers in the vineyard of the Lord Jesus, you must all set your account upon being despised and reproached for his dear sake. You weaker ones come to your minister and say, "So-and-so has spoken evil of me." What, young friend, is this a strange thing? Did this never happen to anybody before? You sit down and cry, "It will break my heart; this cruel report will be the death of me." Was no one else ever broken in heart by reproach? Did nobody else have his character besmeared by the fingers of envy and the tongue of tale-bearing? Who are you, my fine sir, that you should escape? Gentle sister, who are you that you are never to be abused? Humble yourself and do not be so proud as to think a special escape should be made for you, when your Lord and all his followers have had to endure much contradiction of sinners. Woe unto you when all men speak well of you. It is a blessing to attain to such a state that you care no more than the rock careth for the raging billows what men may say, so long as you have a conscience void of offense both toward God and toward man. In all these things, however, we ought to expect evil tidings.

**2.** Evil tidings will also come to us concerning spiritual matters, and babes in grace will be greatly alarmed. Every now and then there cometh a messenger with breathless haste, who tells us that the sages have discovered that the Bible is a fiction. Years ago, we were all astonished to find that people had been digging down into the earth, and had brought up loads of very hard stones, with which Revelation was to be slain, like Stephen by the Jews. Revelation has lived on wonderfully well and flourished amazingly, notwithstanding all that. Another very judicious naturalist afterwards discovered-and oh, what consternation there was-that we had all sprung from monkeys, and that all living creatures were the result of successive developments from infusorial atoms. Somehow or other, the gospel has managed to survive even this tremendous blow. Not

many mouths ago, a learned quarryman dug up a jaw-bone and a bushel or two of pointed flints, the undoubted property of primeval men who lived, according to report, ages before Adam; now this discovery was to silence for ever the teachings of inspiration. Those flints were invincible and deadly weapons! But the religion of Jesus is so full of life, that her deadliest foes cannot make an end of her. Voltaire, you remember, had a printing-press at Geneva some years ago, with which he printed a prophecy that Christianity would not survive the century of which he thought himself the bright and shining light; that very press is now printing copies of the Bible in Geneva. A few weeks ago we were informed ethnologically that negroes were nearly allied to apes, and that the Scripture statement that God has made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth was clearly contrary to fact; but, my brethren, this grand old book manages still to survive, and I think the most of us who know its value can say we are not afraid of evil tidings which prophesy the overthrow of its authority, for it will see all its foes withered in the grass, and yet not one of its jots or tittles shall pass away. Our heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. We can leave these gentlemen to the old women among us, whose experimental acquaintance with the power of godliness will be as a two-edged sword to slay the enemies' sounding professions of superior intelligence. The blind and the lame in the Lord's army shall laugh to scorn the champions of the Philistines, for the Lord of Hosts is with us as our captain, and Jesus rides forth conquering and to conquer.

Sadder tidings at times afflict us. We hear, dear friends, that professors have fallen, and what a thunder-clap it seems when we are told that such-and-such a prominent member has forsaken the path of rectitude, or a minister has departed from sound doctrine. Yes, and we must expect this. Judas and Demas will be represented over and over again, and even Simon Magus will not be wanting in the Church as long as it is here below. We shall, moreover, hear that success has vanished where once it ruled. We may preach the gospel and win thousands of souls; but on a sudden there may be no conversions, and those who are the warmest adherents of the truth may gradually grow cold. For these things be ready. There have been ebbs and flows in the Church in all ages; and her progress has been like that of the ocean when it cometh to its flood: it has been by a succession of in-rolling waves, and waves that fall back again into the sea. So will it be till Christ cometh.

We shall also hear evil tidings about ourselves. Satan will tell us that we are hypocrites, and conscience will remind us of sundry things which raise the suspicion that we are not soundly regenerated. It will be a blessed thing if then we can fly again to the cross of Jesus Christ. If the law thunders at us and gives us evil tidings of wrath to come, happy are we if we can fly to the great law-fulfiller and find a shelter from the law's clamorous demands. But we must expect this. No saint gets to heaven without being attacked by Satan. An old divine was wont to say that the way to heaven passed by the mouth of hell. Ye must have spiritual conflicts. How could you be crowned if you did not fight, and how could you win the victory if you knew no battle?

**3.** Moreover, to conclude the list, the evil tidings of death will soon be brought to you by the appointed messenger. How evil are the solemn tidings of departure to the most of men! The message will be given to us, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." We shall see the spirit-finger which beckons down to the cold flood of Jordan, but we shall not fear those evil tidings, nay, faith shall count them a blessed message, and we shall march cheerfully onward where Jesus leads the way.

In eternity there shall be the evil tidings of the angelic trumpet, evil to all but saints, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." The general summons shall gather together all nations of men to stand before the dread tribunal, but truly in that case our heart shall be so fixed, nay, flooded with divine delights, that with joy shall we receive the resurrection, and with transport stand to be acquitted at the judgment-seat.

I have thus marshalled before you a line of grim-visaged messengers, any one of whom may, within a moment, rush into your chamber, crying, "Tidings! Thou man of God! Tidings!"

**II.** Now for a second and more cheerful thought. A CHRISTIAN AT NO TIME OUGHT TO FEAR EITHER AN EXPECTATION OF EVIL TIDINGS, OR WHEN THE TIDINGS ACTUALLY ARRIVE.

Under no conceivable circumstances ought you, Christian, to be afraid. And why? Because, if you be troubled, and distressed, and distracted, what do you more than other men? Other men have not your God to fly to; they are not favourites of heaven as you are; they have never proved the faithfulness of God as you have done, and it is no wonder if they are bowed down with alarm and cowed with fear: but as for you, you profess

to be of another spirit; you testify to the world that God dwelleth in you, and you in him; you say that you have been begotten again unto a lively hope; you testify that your heart lives in heaven and not on earthly things; now, if you are seen to be distracted as other men, what is the value of that grace which you profess to have received? Where is the dignity of that new nature which you claim to possess? Surely, dear brother, unless you would be suspected of having boasted beyond your measure, you must not be afraid of evil tidings.

Again, if you should be filled with alarm, as others are, you would, doubtless, be led into the sins so common to others under trying circumstances. The ungodly, when they are overtaken by evil tidings, rebel against God; they murmur, and think that God deals hardly with them. Will you fall into that same sin? Will you provoke the Lord, as they do? If you are the subject of the same distraction, you will, probably, fall into the same murmuring,

Momeover, unconverted men often run to wrong means, to evil shifts, in order to escape from difficulties, and you will be sure to do the same, saint as you are, if your mind too far yields to the present pressure. Trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, Your wisest course is to do as Moses did at the Red Sea, "Stand still and see the salvation of God." But if your heart be troubled, if the water gets leaking into your ship, and the vessel itself is filled with the boiling flood, why, you will be plotting this and plotting the other, and ere long, you will be putting forth your hand unto iniquity, and so piercing yourself through with many sorrows; but if the Holy Spirit enables you in patience to possess your souls, then, if you suffer, you will not sin, and, with all your smarts, you will not suffer from the regret of having departed from the living God.

Further, you must not give way to these doubts, and alarms, and fears, for, if you do, you will be unfit to meet the trouble. In storms landmen are all in alarm, and fear, and they are fit for nothing. Just put them under the hatches and keep them down below, or else they will be in the sailors' way. But the old sailor has seen a storm before, and the captain has had many a nor'-wester blowing upon him, so he looks around him just as if all were calm, and gives his orders to the pilot and the first mate with perfect composure; and when they have to reef all sail and lie under bare poles, or, worse still, if the mast goes by the board, he is very serious, but still quiet and hopeful; he has weathered other tempests, and he shall outlive this

also. But you flurried people who are all in a fluster at every piece of evil tidings, what will you do? Why you will cut your own fingers in seeking to carve your own deliverance; you will push down your house about your head when you meant to have propped it up. You will be quite unable to meet the difficulty if your heart be not “fixed, trusting in the Lord.”

Let me ask you another and very important question. If you give way to fright and fear when you hear of evil tidings, how can you glorify God? Saints can sing God’s high praises in the fires and bless his name on beds of sickness, but you cannot if you fall into distractions. Why, man, can your murmuring praise God? Your doubting and fearing, as if you had none to help you, will these magnify the Most High? Come, I pray thee, if thou wouldst honor God be brave. A certain good man was much troubled under a loss in business; his wife tried to comfort him but failed, and being a very wise woman she gave it up till the morning. In the morning when she came down stairs her face looked so sad that her husband said, “What is the matter with you?” She, still preserving a mournful countenance, said that a dream had troubled her. “What was it, my dear?” he said; “you ought not to be troubled with dreams.” “Oh,” she said, “I dreamed that God was dead, and it was such reason for trouble, that all the angels were weeping in heaven, and all the saints on earth were ready to break their hearts.” Her husband said, “You must not be foolish, you know it was only a dream.” “Oh but,” she said, “to think of God’s being dead!” He replied, “You must not even think of such a thing, for God cannot die, he ever lives to comfort his people.” Instantly her face brightened up, and she said, “I thought I would bring you thus to rebuke yourself, for you have been dreaming that God had forsaken you, and now you see how groundless is your sorrow. While God lives his people are safe.”

So, Christian, I think I could give you many reasons why you should praise God, and take courage even when evil tidings come. For the sake of blessing others, for your own spiritual health and profit, that you may get fatness out of famine, safety out of danger, gain out of loss, do pray that your heart may be fixed in sure confidence upon the faithfulness of your covenant God.

**III.** But now somebody will say, “I do not know how I am to keep from these fears. My mind is like that of another man, and I am readily disturbed.” Dear brother, the text tells you, in the third place, that



## FIXEDNESS OF HEART IS THE TRUE CURE FOR BEING ALARMED AT EVIL TIDINGS.

“Fixedness of heart.” The translators somewhat differ as to what this passage means; and some think it means preparedness of heart; “my heart is fixed,” or, “my heart is prepared.” Let it mean both, and then we shall have the whole truth, for he whose heart is fixed is prepared. Now in what respect is a Christian’s heart fixed? I think, in many.

First, the Christian’s heart is fixed as to duty. He says within himself, “It is my business so to walk as Christ also walked: it can never be right for me to do contrary to God’s will, I have set the Lord always before me, and in integrity of heart will I walk all my way, wherever that way may lead.” Such a man is prepared for anything. Whatever trial comes he is prepared to meet it, because his soul is resolved that come gain, come loss, he will not be dishonest to make himself rich; he will not tell a lie to win a kingdom, he will not give up a principle to save his life. He has not to go, as some of you have, to the next neighbor to say, “What am I to do? What is the best policy?” The Christian has no policy; he does right, and leaves consequences to God. I know that if the skies wanted propping with sin, it is no business of mine to prop them, and if they could only be sustained by my speaking falsely, they should fall. Truth is our business, integrity is our line of duty, and results remain with the Most High. In this respect the man who by grace is fixed for the strait and narrow road, is prepared, come what may.

But, more comfortable than this, the Christian’s heart is fixed as to knowledge and so prepared. There are some things which a believer knows and is quite fixed about. He knows, for instance, that God sits in the stern-sheets of the vessel when it rocks most. He believes that an invisible hand is always on the world’s tiller, and that wherever providence may drift, Jehovah steers it. That re-assuring knowledge prepares him for everything. “It is my Father’s will,” saith he. He looks over the raging waters and he sees the spirit of Jesus treading the billows, and he hears a voice which saith, “It is I, be not afraid.” He knows too that God is always wise, and, knowing this, he is prepared for all events. They cannot come amiss, saith he, there can be no accidents, no mistakes, nothing can occur which ought not to occur. If I should lose all I have, it is better that I should lose than have, if God so wills: the worst calamity is the wisest and the kindest thing that could occur to me if God ordains it. “We know that all things work

together for good to them that love God.” The Christian does not merely hold this as a theory, but he knows it as a matter of fact. Every thing has worked for good as yet; the poisonous drugs that have been mixed in the compound have nevertheless worked the cure; the sharp cuts of the lancet have cleansed out the proud flesh amid facilitated the healing. Every event as yet has worked out the most divinely blessed results; and so, believing this, that God rules it, that God rules wisely, that God brings good out of evil, the believer’s heart is fixed and he is well prepared. Here, bring me which cup you will, my Father fills them all and I will drink them as he sends them, not merely with resignation, but with sanctified delight. Send me what thou wilt, my God, so long as it comes from thee; never was that a bad portion which came from thy table to any one of thy children. My Father, write what thou wilt concerning thy child, I will not seek to pry between the folded leaves, but I will patiently hope and quietly wait as leaf by leaf is unfolded, knowing thou art too wise to err and too good to be unkind. Now see what a preparation this is for evil tidings, this having the heart fixed in a knowledge of God.

Further, there is another kind of fixedness, namely, the fixedness of resignation. There is a verse we sing in one of the hymns, that I hardly think at times some of us ought to sing, for it is not at all times true;

“O thou gracious, wise and just, In thy hands my life I trust, Have I somewhat dearer still? I resign it to thy will.” It is very easy to say that, but very difficult to carry it out. To take Isaac, our only son, up to the altar, and unsheath the knife at God’s command, needs an Abrahamic faith, and that kind of faith is not so common as it might be among Christians.

Beloved, when we gave ourselves to Christ, we gave him our person. our estate, our friends, and everything: we made a full surrender, and the only way to be right when affliction comes, is to stand to that surrender, in fact, to renew it every day. It is a good thing every morning to give all up to God, and then to live through the day, and thank him for renewing the daily lease. If you think you have mercies on a fifty years’ lease, you will become discontented if turned out of the tenancy; but if you feel you are only as it were a daily tenant, you will feel grateful that the great Landlord has given you a new lease. The eyes of your body—are they given for ever? Their light may never know to-morrow’s sun. Those lips, which you to-day give to God’s service, may soon chill in silence. So is it with all you have. Then resign all to God, for if you give it all up to him every day, it will not be hard to give it up when he takes it away at last. If you have resigned it a

thousand times before, it will only be a repetition of what you have rehearsed to yourself aforetime, and, therefore, are well taught in. Stand to your resignation, be fixed about that, and you will be prepared for the most evil tidings.

Better still, let me remind you of one form of fixedness which will make you outlive every storm, namely, fixedness as to eternal things. "I cannot lose --the Christian may say--" I cannot lose my best things." When a carrier has many parcels to carry, if he has gold and silver or precious stones, he is sure to put them near himself. Perhaps he has some common goods, and these he ties on behind: some thief, it is possible, steals from the cart some of the common goods which were outside. "Oh, well," says the man when he gets home, "I am sorry to lose anything, but my precious things are all right; I have them all safe; I thank God the thief could not run away with them." Now, our earthly goods and even our dearest friends are only the common mercies of God, but our Savior, our God, our eternal interest in the covenant, our heaven which we are soon to inherit, these are kept where they cannot be lost. A friend of mine once went up to the Bank with a thousand pounds in his pocket. I do not think he was very wise, for after putting that large sum in his pocket, he put his pocket-handkerchief over it, and somewhere or other down in the Borough, or over London Bridge, a thief stole his pocket-handkerchief. He said to me "I never thought at all about that; I was so full of joy at finding that the money was not gone." The anecdote is instructive, for our earthly comforts compared with our eternal interests are but as the pocket-handkerchief compared to the thousand pounds, nay, they do not bear so high a relation. If adversity should come and take everything else away, yet, Christian, your heart is still fixed because you have a grasp of eternal things; and neither life nor death, nor time, nor eternity, can make you let go your hold of the glory which is to be revealed in you. Thus you are prepared, come what may.

I will only add one other thought on that point, I believe that holy gratitude is one blessed way of fixing the soul on God and preparing it for trouble. You have a friend who gave you a very hard word the other day. You felt very grieved, but after a few minutes you said, "There, now, if he were to kick me, I should always love him for the great kindness that he did to me years ago when I was in great straits." Now, when I think of what our God has done for us, how he saved us from going down into the pit and found a ransom in his own dear Son, when we remember how he has plucked us out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, let him do what seemeth

him good: the Lord gave us Christ, then let him take away what he will, we cannot think hardly of him; after such a proof of love we are bound to him by such ties of gratitude that let him take away one mercy after the other, till there is hardly one left, we will yet bless his name. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” Let every saint of God feel himself so fixed and bound by ties of gratitude that he is prepared, whatever may come, still to bless his God,

**IV.** The last point is this, THE GREAT INSTRUMENT OF FIXEDNESS OF HEART IS FAITH IN GOD. “His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.” You see that we have come hither by progressive steps. Evil tidings may come to an heir of heaven; he ought not to be afraid of them; the way to be prepared for them is to have the heart fixed and prepared, and the method of having the heart fixed is confident trustfulness in the Lord, The Christian is not prepared for trial by trusting in his fellow men, or by relying upon his own wisdom and experience. We lean on a better prop than an arm of flesh, The Christian relies only upon his God. Every attribute engages this confidence. The heir of heaven rests in the love of God. “Oh,” saith he, “my Father loves me too well to suffer any evil thing to damage me. I know by that very Spirit which he has given, by which I cry ‘Abba, Father,’ I know the tenderness of his heart forbids that I should ever perish, or that anything should happen to me which shall do me serious damage.” When there was a fire many years ago in the little town of Delft, in Holland, it occurred in a house upon the top of which a stork’s nest had been built. Now, the storks are very affectionate to their young, and it was observed that as the flames went up, the storks tried first of all to carry off their young, but when that could not be done, both parents kept flapping their nests with their wings, as though to cool the young ones, and when the flames drew nearer, both parents set themselves down over the top of the nest and there died with their young ones. Can it be possible that our God could have less affection for his own children than these poor birds had for the offspring of their nest? Impossible! He will cover us with his feathers, and under his wings will we trust; his truth shall be our shield and buckler. Come famine, come pestilence, come disease, come death, come judgment,

*“He that hath lov’d us bears us through,  
And makes us more than conquerors too.”*

The believer, thus dependent upon God’s love, is also trusting in God’s power. He knows that none ever did resist the Lord with success. That

mighty arm breaketh in pieces the enemy. When he goeth forth to war, it is as when the potter breaketh earthen vessels with a rod of iron. The Christian feels that the omnipotence of God is more to be trusted than the potency of the devil is to be dreaded. "More is he that is for us than all they that he against us." The Christian perceives the enemy round about, but his eyes have been touched with heavenly ointment, and he can also see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire, and therefore he trusteth in the power of his God, and his soul is not disturbed.

He relies also, as we have said, upon the wisdom of God; for indeed, every attribute of the Most High becomes a subject of the believer's joy. I am afraid, dear friends, we forget our God too often. I am sure that at the bottom we do not believe him to be wise, or else we do not believe him to be gracious, for, if we did know, and feel, and realize that he is God, and just such a God as Scripture says he is, we should lean back upon him, and leave trouble, adversity, loss, and crosses with him, casting all our care on him, because he careth for us. Get, I pray you, to be assured of his sympathy with you. Do not think he is indifferent to the griefs that vex you. You are in the furnace, but he sits at the mouth of it, watching you as the dross melts in the flame. God is never away from any of his children, but he is nearest to those who are the most sad, and sick, and troubled. If there be one sheep in the fold that is more watched over than the rest, it is the weakest sheep. "He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young." You cannot think how dear you are to his heart; and he is so determined to bring you safely home, that he has sworn it with an oath. By two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, he has given you strong consolation. Will you reject the consolation when he brings it? Is not the Comforter himself able to comfort you? Christ has gone to heaven that you might have that precious gift of the Comforter within you. Why will you grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and bring this trouble upon your own spirit by these anxieties, these doubtings, and frettings. "Trust ye in the Lord Jehovah, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Go with joy and draw water out of the wells of salvation, and praise him all the days of your life. When Dr. Payson was getting near his end, he reminded his friends that God is enough for his people. Said he, "In years gone by, I often dreaded the taking away of certain earthly comforts, but when they have been withdrawn, I have had so much more of the grace and presence of God, that I have had to be thankful for the apparent loss, for it was a real gain. And now," said he,

“that I am a cripple and confined to my house, I am far happier than I ever expected to be. and am as happy as a man well could be out of heaven.”  
We can sing that verse together-

*“And if our dearest comforts fall  
Before his sovereign will,  
He never takes away our all;  
Himself he gives us still.”*

Since you have your God left you, Christian, let the text be true of you,  
“He is not afraid of evil tidings: for his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”

I have not time to say anything about the contrast to all this, but it is a contrast which would bear very hard upon those of you who have not looked to Jesus Christ. You have need to be afraid of everything. The stones of the earth are not in league with you, nor are the beasts of the earth at peace with you. There is no providence working your good; there is no special eye upon your benefit. You are orphan children. The stars in heaven fought against Sisera, remember, and they fight against you. The sweet influence of the Pleiades you cannot know, but for in heavenly blessings you can claim no share. Oh, that you could hide yourself beneath the wings of God! Do you desire it? Then remember who it was that said, “How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.” Fly to the Savior: there are his wounds; they will afford you shelter. He died to save the lost; for the rebellious he hath obtained mercies. Give him your soul to save; trust him to work a good work in you and for you, and you shall never die, but, with holy joy and confidence, shall live in the light of his countenance evermore. The Lord bless this sermon to the staying of his people’s hearts upon himself, and his shall be the praise. Amen.

# DEGREES OF POWER ATTENDING THE GOSPEL.

NO. 648

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 3RD, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.” —

1 Thessalonians 1:5.

PAUL here claimed two things which are absolutely necessary to success in the Christian ministry. He could call the gospel “our gospel,” and this is a foremost essential in a sent servant of Jesus Christ. Paul, Silas, and Timothy, here speaking at once, declare the word which they had preached to be their own in a peculiar sense: every true minister must be able to do the same; we must ourselves have been saved before we preach salvation. “I believed, therefore have I spoken,” says the Psalmist; “we also believe, and therefore speak,” say the whole college of the apostles. Without faith, the religious teacher is a mere pretender unworthy of respect. The Christian minister must, however, not only believe the truth of what he asserts, but he must experimentally enjoy it. The husbandman that laboureth must himself also first be partaker of the fruit. Before Ezekiel delivered to the people the prophecies which were written in the roll, the voice came to him, “Son of man, eat this roll;” and he did not only take it into his mouth, where it was like honey for sweetness, but it descended even into his bowels, and mingled with his innermost self. We must ourselves feel the weight of that burden of the Lord which we proclaim to others, or we shall not be ministers of the apostolic sort, but rather shall be descendants of the hypocritical Pharisees who bound heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, upon other men’s shoulders, but were not willing to

touch them with so much as one of their fingers. The apostle Paul could with peculiar propriety call the gospel his own; on the road to Damascus he had singularly experienced its mighty power; and afterwards, in trials oft, in difficulties many, in experiences varied, in temptations furious, he had made each truth of Scripture his own by having tasted its sweetness, handled its strength, proved its comfort, and tried its power. Do not think of preaching, young man, until you have truth written on your very soul; as well think of steering the Great Eastern across the ocean without knowing the first principles of navigation; as well think of setting up as an ambassador without your country's sanction, as to dare to intrude yourself into the Christian ministry unless the gospel is first your own. No amount of training at Oxford, or Cambridge, or anywhere else, no extent of classical or mathematical teaching can ever make you a minister of Jesus Christ, if you lack the first necessary, namely, a personal interest in salvation by Jesus Christ. What! will you profess to be a physician, while the leprosy is on your own brow? Will you attempt to stand between the living and the dead when you are yourself devoid of spiritual life? The priests of old were touched with the blood upon the thumb, the toe, and the ear, to show that they were consecrated everywhere; and none among us must dare to exercise any office for God among his people till first of all we know the cleansing, quickening, refining, sanctifying power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It must be our gospel before we may so much as think of aspiring to the high and holy office of the gospel ministry. But this alone is not sufficient. The Christian minister, he would imitate Paul, must be very careful of his manner of life among the people. He must be able to say without blushing "Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." Unselfishness must be our prominent attribute, all must be done for our people's sake; and then, we must in our lives show the truthfulness of our unselfish professions. O God, how much of grace is wanted that thy servants may be clear of the blood of all men and make full proof of their ministry. We are not appointed to stand as motionless way-posts to point the way with lifeless accuracy and unsympathizing coldness; this many have done, and while showing the road have never moved one inch in it themselves: such men shall have terrible judgment at the last. We are appointed to be guides to the pilgrims in over the hills of life, and we are bound to attend their footsteps and tread the road ourselves; clambering up every hill of difficulty and descending every valley of humiliation, crying to the pilgrim band, "Be ye followers of us even as we are followers of Christ Jesus." It is not for us to say, "Go!" but "Come!"



We are not to bid you do without first doing ourselves. It is an ill time with the preacher when he is compelled to say, “Do as I say and not as I do;” for evil practice will drown the best of preaching. Oh! that holy living, intense earnestness, passionate longing for souls, vehement importunity in prayer, humility and sincerity, may so blend together in our walk and conversation, that having the gospel to be our own, we may be fully fitted for the work of the Christian ministry “for your sake,” that you who bear us may not find us unprofitable in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having said thus much upon the ministry itself, we observe that our text deals mainly with the hearers, and therefore has a voice for you. We shall use the text for two purposes: first, by way of discrimination; and, secondly, for instruction.

**I.** The text suggests, and very strongly too, a thoroughly heart — searching DISCRIMINATION, a mode of testing ourselves by which our election may be proved, or our unregeneracy discovered.

The gospel comes to all who hear it. In our own land, especially among you who constantly attend places of worship, it comes to you all. If I understand Scripture aright, it is the same gospel which comes to the unregenerate as to the regenerate and though in some it be “a savor of death unto death,” and in others “a savor of life unto life,” yet the distinction is not in the gospel but in the way in which it is received or rejected. Some of our brethren who are very anxious to carry out the decrees of God, instead of believing that God can carry them out himself, always try to make distinctions in their preachings, giving one gospel to one set of sinners, and another to a different class. They are very unlike the old sowers, who, when they went out to sow, sowed among thorns, and on stony places, and by the way-side; but these brethren, with profounder wisdom, endeavor to find out which is the good ground, and they will insist upon it that not so much as a single handful of invitations may be cast anywhere but on the prepared soil. They are much too wise to preach the gospel in Ezekiel’s fashion to the dry bones in the valley while they are yet dead; they withhold any word of gospel till there is a little quivering of life among the bones, and then they commence operations. They do not think it to be their duty to go into the highways and hedges and bid all, as many as they find, to come to the supper. Oh, no! They are too orthodox to obey the Master’s will; they desire to understand first who are appointed to come to the supper, and then they will invite them; that is to say, they will

do what there is no necessity to do. They have not faith enough, or enough subjugation of will to the supreme commands of the great Master, to do that which only faith dare do, namely, tell the dry bones to live, bid the man with the withered hand stretch out his arm, and speak to him that is sick of the palsy, and tell him to take up his bed and walk. It strikes me, that refusing to set forth Jesus to all men, of every character, and refraining from inviting them to come to him, is a great mistake. I do not find David suiting his counsels to the ability of men. David gives commands to ungodly men. "Be wise, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, while his wrath is kindled but a little." He did not withhold his exhortation because they were such rebels that they would not and could not kiss the king. No! but he told them to do it, whether they could or not. So with the Prophets. They boldly say, "Wash you! make you clean! Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well." One of them absolutely cries, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit," Ezekiel 18:31; and yet, I doubt not, that he was perfectly agreed with that other prophet, who taught the powerlessness of man in those two memorable questions, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" These men did not think that they were to judge of what they were to preach by the degree of power in the hearers; but they judged by the power which dwells in their God to make the Word effectual. As it was with prophets, so was it with apostles; for Peter cried to the crowd who gathered about the Beautiful Gate of the temple, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." They delivered the gospel, the same gospel to the dead as to the living, the same gospel to the non-elect as to the elect. The point of distinction is not in the gospel, but in its being applied by the Holy Spirit, or left to be rejected of man. The same gospel, it strikes me in the text, came to all, and the point of distinction was farther on, namely, in the operation of that gospel upon the heart.

**1.** It appears then, in the first place, that to some the gospel comes only in word. Even here there are gradations. To some it only comes in word in this fashion, that they scarcely know what it is all about. Some of you go to a place of worship because it is a right thing, and you sit down on the seats and sit out an hour-and-a-half or so of penance. When that is done you feel you have performed a very proper act, but you do not know what the talk was all about. It may be said of you, that hearing you (10 not beam, for your ears are dull and heavy. You know no more of the divine

mind than the men who were with Saul on the road to Damascus, who heard a voice but saw no man. I believe a very large majority of church-goers know no more of what the preaching is about than did Jonathan's lad when he ran after the arrows; their flight David well understood, "bat the lad knew nothing of the matter." Too many are merely the stolid, unthinking, slumbering worshippers of an unknown God. In others the word comes in a little better sense, but still in word only. They have it, and they understand it in theory. and probably are much pleased with it, especially if it be delivered in a manner which suits their taste, or which commends itself to their understanding. They hear and they do not quite forget. They remember and are gratified with illustrations, doctrinal truths, and so on: but when you have said that you have said all. The gospel remains in them as certain potent drugs remain in the chemist's drawers, they are there but they produce no effect. The gospel comes to them as an unloaded cannon rumbles into its shed, or as a barrel of gunpowder is rolled into the magazine, there is no force in it because the fire of God's Spirit is absent. The preacher lashes the air and whips the water, woos the wind, and invites the cloud when he preaches to such as these. They hear, but hear in vain, insensible as steel. To others it comes in a preferable manner but still only in word. They are really affected by it; the tears stream down their cheeks; they scarcely know how to sit; they resolve, if they once get home, they will pray; they think of amending their lives; past follies and present dangers come before them, and they are somewhat alarmed; but the morning cloud is not more fleeing, and the early dew vanishes not sooner than these good things of theirs. They look at their natural face in the glass of the Word, but they go away to forget what manner of men they are; because the emotion felt is produced by the words, and not by the spirit and life of the truth. Why, brethren, men weep at a theater, and weep far more there than they do in holier places of worship; therefore, merely to weep under a sermon is no sign of having derived profit therefrom. Some of my brethren are very great hands at unearthing the dead, conducting you to the funeral urns of your parents, or reminding you of your departed little ones, and possibly they may be the means of introducing better feelings by this kind of working upon your emotions; but I am not sure of it — I am afraid that much of the holy water which is spilt from human eyes in our places of worship, is not much more valuable than the holy water at the doors of the Catholic chapels. It is mere eye-water after all, and not heart-sorrow. Mere excitement produced by oratory is the world's weapon in attaining its end; we want something

more than that for spiritual purposes: if we could “speak with the tongues of men and of angel’s” and stir you up to as great an enthusiasm as ever Demosthenes wrought in the Greeks of old, all that would avail nothing if it were only the effect of the preacher’s impassioned language and telling manner — the gospel would have come

To you “in word only;” and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and nothing more.

At this point I may very solemnly ask whether it is not true of some who compose the present congregation that you know the truth only in word? There is a certain class of persons, and some of them are present this morning, who are professional sermon-hearers; you go one Sunday to hear Mr. A. and then another Sunday to hear Mr. B., and you carry with you our sacchraometers — instruments for measuring the quantity of sweetness in each sermon — and you take a gauge of the style and matter of the preacher; you estimate what blunders he makes, and wherein he could be improved, and you compare or contrast him with somebody else, as if you were tea-factos tasting Souchong and Bohea, or cheesemongers trying Cheddar and American. Some individuals of this order are little better than spiritual vagabonds, without settled habitation or occupation; who go about from place to place, listening to this and to that, and getting no good whatever; while as to doing good, the thought never enters their brain. You cannot expect that the gospel will come to you in anything else but as a killing letter, for you go to hear it as merely words. You do not look for fruit: if you see leaves you are quite satisfied. You do not desire a blessing; if you did, you would receive it. It is at once one of the most wicked and one of the most foolish habits to waste our time in constantly criticising God’s Word and God’s ministers. Well said George Herbert, “Judge not the preacher, he is thy judge.” What hast thou to do to say of God’s ambassador, that his words were not well mouthed? If God speak by him, God knows who is best to speak for him; and if his Master sent the man, beware lest thou illtreat him, lest thou suffer like them of old who illtreated the ambassadors of David, and drove him to proclaim war against them.

**2.** According to the text, there are others to whom the word comes with three accompaniments. The apostle speaks of “power” and “the Holy Ghost,” and “much assurance.” I do not think that the word of God comes to many people with all these three timings. It comes to a very numerous

class with “power;” to a smaller number with “power and the Holy Ghost;” to an inner circle of select ones “in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.”

If I have the meaning of this passage, and I am not so certain about it as to dogmatize, it strikes me that there are three degrees of effect produced by the gospel. At any rate, we shall not be wrong in saying that there is sometimes an effect produced by the gospel which may be called “power,” but which, nevertheless, is not the power which saves. To many of you, my dear hearers, the word of our gospel has come with power upon your understandings. You have heard it, weighed it, judged it, and received it as being true and of divine authority. Your understanding has assented to the various propositions which we have proclaimed as doctrines of Christ. You feel that you could not well do otherwise; these truths agree so well, and are so adapted at once to the ruin of your nature and to its best aspirations, that you do not kick as some do against it. You have been convinced of the authenticity and authority of the gospel by the gospel. Perhaps you have never read “Paley’s Evidences,” and never studied “Butler’s Analogy,” but the gospel itself has come to you with sufficient power to be its own witness to you, and your understanding joyfully acknowledges that this is the word of God, and you receive it as such. It has done more than that, it has come with power to the conscience of some of you. It has convinced you of sin. You feel now that self-righteousness on your part is folly, and though you may indulge in self-righteousness yet it is with your eyes open. You do not sin now so cheaply as you once did, for you know a little of the sinfulness of sin. Moreover, you have had some alarms with regard to the ultimate end of sin. The gospel has made you know that the wages of sin will be death. You feel that you cannot dwell with everlasting burnings. Your heart is ill at ease when you think upon the wrath to come. Like Felix, you tremble when you are reasoned with concerning “righteousness and judgment to come,” and though you have put it off as yet, and have said, “Go thy way till I have a more convenient season,” yet it has come to you so far with a degree of power. More than this it has had an effect upon your feelings as well as upon your conscience. Your desires have been awakened. You have sometimes said, “Oh that I were saved.” You have advanced as far at any rate as Balaam, when he said, “Let me die the death of the righteous.” Your feelings of hope are excited: you hope that yet you may lay hold of eternal life, and your fears are not altogether dead: you tremble when under the word of God. Natural emotions which look like spiritual ones, have been produced in you by the beaming of the Word,

though as yet the gospel has not come with the Holy Ghost. Beyond all this, the gospel has come with power to some of you on your lives. I can look with anxious pleasure upon some of you, because I know the gospel has done you much good though it has not saved you; though alas! there are others to whom it has only been for a time as a bit and bridle, but they have afterwards turned aside from it. There are those here who, like the dogs have gone back to their vomit, and, like the sow that was washed, to their wallowing in the mire. We had hope for you once, but we must almost cease to hope. Certain persons rush into drunkenness, after seasons of abstinence, having known the evil of the sin, and having professed to hate it; the passion has been too strong for them, and they have fallen again into that deep ditch in which so many of the abhorred of the Lord lie and rot. Oh, may God, in his infinite mercy, bring the gospel with something more than this common power to your souls! May it come with "the Holy Ghost" as well as with power.

You see we have come up by gradations to some considerable height already, but we now come to a far nobler elevation and speak of saving grace. To many in this house, as at Thessalonica, the Word has come "in the Holy Ghost." Brethren. I cannot describe to you how it is that the Holy Ghost operates by the Word. The work of the Spirit is figured forth by some such mysterious timing as a birth, or as the blowing of the wind. It is a great secret, and therefore not to be expounded, but many of you know it experimentally. The Holy Ghost first of all came to you as a great quickener. How he made you live you do not know, but this you know, that what you had not once you now have; that there burns within you a vital spark of heavenly flame far different from that ordinary spark of life which had been there heretofore. You have now, different feelings, different joys, different sorrows from any you were conscious of before; because, while you were listening to the letter which killeth, the Spirit of God came with it, and the quickening Spirit made you live with a new, higher, and more blessed life. You have within you Jesus Christ, who is life and immortality. You have heaven begun within your heart. You have passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation. To you the Word of God then has come with the Holy Ghost in a quickening sense. Then it entered with an illuminating power. It enlightened you as to your sins. What blackness you discovered in your sins when the Holy Spirit once cast a light upon them. Brethren, you had no idea that you were such sinners as you turned out to be. The Holy Ghost startled and astonished

you with revelations of that great and fathomless depth of depravity which you found to be surging within your souls. You were alarmed, humbled, cast into the dust. You began, perhaps, to despair, but then the same illumination of the Spirit came in to comfort you, for he then showed you Christ Jesus, the unbounded power of his blood to take away your unbounded sins, his willingness to receive you just as you were, his suitability to your case and to your circumstances; and as soon as you saw Jesus in the light of the Holy Ghost you looked unto him and were lightened, and henceforth your face has never been ashamed. So the Spirit of God came to you as light, to dispel your darkness, and give you joy and peace. Since that time you have experienced the Holy Spirit as comforting you. Amidst darkest shades he has risen as the sunlight upon your souls. Your burdens have been removed by him, the blessed Paraclete! He has brought Christ and the things of Christ to your remembrance. He has opened up to you precious promises. He has cracked the shell and given you to partake of the kernel of the privilege of the covenant of grace. He has broken the bone and satisfied you with marrow and fatness out of the deep things of God. His dove-like wings, whenever they brood over you, bring order out of confusion, and yield kindly comfort in the midst of some adversity. You have also felt the Holy Spirit in his inflaming energies. He has rested on you when you have heard the Word, as the spirit of burning; your sin has been consumed by the holy revenge which you felt against it. You have been led to great heights of love to Christ, till you could sing,

*“Had I ten thousand thousand tongues,  
Not one should silent be;  
Had I ten thousand thousand hearts,  
I’d give them all to thee.”*

When the Holy Ghost has blessed the Word, your heart has been like the altar of incense with the flame always burning, and a sweet perfume going up, acceptable to the Most High. Beloved, you have also felt the Holy Ghost with the Word as a spirit of rejoicing Oh! the bliss we have sometimes tasted! I am very frequently heavy in spirit, but oh! the raptures which my heart has known when the Holy Ghost has shown me my eternal election of God, my standing in Christ Jesus, my completeness and acceptance in the Beloved, my security through the faithfulness of the eternal God. What delights come streaming into the soul when you read of everlasting love, of faithfulness never wavering, of affection never changing of a purpose standing fast as pillars of brass and firm as the

eternal hills. And oh, beloved, what extravagance I was about to say, of joy do we sometimes feel in anticipation of the glory to be revealed. Looking from Nebo's brow we see the landscape down below, but, better than Moses could do, we drink already of the rivers which flow with milk and honey, and pluck ripe fruits from celestial trees. While in communion with Christ Jesus we get the best antepast of the glory that remaineth. Now this it is to receive the Word "in the Holy Ghost." Beloved, I hope we know what this means, and you who do not know it, may a prayer go up from every living soul here, "Lord, let the Holy Spirit go with the preaching of Jesus Christ, and let it be made effectual unto salvation."

Beloved, the highest point in the text is "much assurance." If I understand the passage, it means this: first, that they were fully persuaded of its truthfulness, and had no staggering or blinding doubts about it; and secondly, that they had the fullest possible conviction of their interest in the truth delivered to them. They were saved, but better still! they knew that they were so. They were clean, but better still! they rejoiced in their purity. They were in Christ, but what is more joyous still, they knew that they were in Christ. They had no doubts as some of you have, no dark suspicions; the Word had come with such blessed demonstration that it had swept every Canannitish doubt clean out of their hearts. According to Poole, the Greek word here used has in it the idea of a ship at full sail, undisturbed by the waves which ripple in its way. A ship, when the wind is thoroughly favorable, and its full sails are bearing it directly into harbour, is not held back by the surging billows. True, the vessel may rock, but it neither turns to the right hand, nor to the left. Let the billows be as they may, the wind is sufficiently powerful to overcome their contrary motion, and the vessel goes right straight ahead. Some Christians get the gospel in that way. They have not a shadow of a doubt about its being true. They have not even the beginning of a doubt about their interest in it, and therefore they have nothing to do, but with God's strong hand upon the tiller, and the heavenly wind blowing right into the sail, to go right straight on, doing the will of God, glorifying his name. May the Word come to you, dear friends, as it does to so very few! may it come in "full assurance," as well as in "power," and in "the Holy Ghost!"

**3.** I shall leave this first head of the text, when I observe that this is the way in which God's elect are known. The apostle says, "Knowing, brethren, beloved, your election of God." Why? Knowing it not by making a guess about it; not by questioning you whether you are awakened sinners,



whether you are sensible or insensible sinners; not by waiting to preach the gospel to you when you are prepared to receive the gospel; but we preached the gospel to you as you were, and we found out who were the elect by this, that the elect of God received the gospel as it came, “in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.” This is the test of election, the Holy Ghost blessing the Word; and, dear friends, if the Holy Ghost has blessed it to you, you need not want to turn over the mysterious pages of the divine decrees, for your name is there. You have not my word for it, but God’s word for it. He would not have brought you to feel the indwelling life of the Holy Spirit, if he had not from before all worlds ordained you unto eternal life. But, mark you, and this, observe, comes from the ensuing context, you must give good proof that it is so, or we cannot say, and even the apostle could not have said, “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” We cannot tell whether the word has come to you in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, unless there are the corresponding results. Listen to these words: “And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.” So you see an imitation of apostolical example, a faith which becomes so known as to sound abroad, a joy which affliction itself cannot damp, and a perseverance which is not to be turned aside by difficulties, a conversion which gives up the dearest idols, and binds us to Christ, and makes us watch and wait for him — all these are necessary as proofs of the Holy Ghost having been with the Word. O beloved, I would have you, the members of this congregation, not only converted, but so converted that there should be no doubt about it. I would love to have you not only Christians, but such fruit-bearing Christians, that it will be to a demonstration certain that you have received the word “in much assurance.” Then shall it be equally clear that you are the elect of God. May the Lord grant that the word here may ever be like a powerful magnet thrust into a heap of steel-filings and of ashes, which shall all attract all the filings and bring them out. For that is what the gospel is to do — it is to discern between the precious and the vile; it is to be God’s

winnowing fan to separate his elect from those who are left in their ruin; and it only can do this by the way in which it is received, proving the election of those who receive it “in the Holy Ghost.” Thus much by way of discrimination.

## II. Have patience for a few minutes only while we now use the text by way of PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION.

It is clear from the text, by way of practical instruction, that it is not enough to preach the gospel. Something more is wanted for the conversion of souls than even that. I have stirred you up very often to assist me, dear brethren, in training those of our young men who have been called to preach the gospel, that they may be more efficient in their ministry, and you have kindly helped me. But we must ever bear in mind that though God should privilege us to send out hundreds of his ministering servants, yet there will not be a solitary case of conversion wrought by them alone. We wish to do our best to erect fresh places of worship for this ever increasing city, and it is a happy day to me whenever I see the topstone brought out of a new House of Prayer; but not one single soul shall ever be made to rejoice in Christ Jesus by the mere fact of a place of worship being erected, or of worship being celebrated therein. We must have the energy of the Holy Ghost. There is the one all important matter. What is there practical about this? Why, then it becomes more and more imperatively necessary that we should be much in prayer to God that the Holy Ghost would come. We have the spirit of prayerfulness among us as a Church. Let me earnestly entreat you never to lose it. There are certain of my brethren and sisters here who are never absent from our great gathering on Monday evening, and whose prayers have brought down many blessings; but it is the part of fidelity for me to say that theme nine some of you wino might be here if you would, who seldom favor us with your presence, or, let me say, who seldom do yourselves the happiness of waiting up on God in prayer-meetings. You are not the best of our members; you will never be the best of them if you stay away without having a justifiable excuse. I do not say this to those who I know must be absent; and I do not say it to bring women out who ought to be seeing to their husbands, or to bring men out who ought to be attending to their shops; but I say it to some who might as well be here as not, and would bring no detriment to themselves whatever by being here: and I must qualify what I say with this, that I have less to complain of in this respect than any man in Christendom, for there is no place that I ever knew or

heard of where the prayer-meeting bears so good and fair a proportion to the Sunday gathering as it does here. But still, brethren, we want you all to pray. I would I could see you all! Oh! it were a happy day if we could see this place full on Monday evening. I do not know why it should not be. It strikes me that if your hearts were once to get thoroughly warmed we should fill this house for prayer. And what a blessing we might expect to receive! Why, we have had such a blessing already that we have not room enough to receive it now; but still, as the cup begins to run over, let it run over and over; there are many churches in this neighborhood that can catch the runnings-over, and may they be profited thereby. Let us increase our prayings as we increase our doings. I like that of Martin Luther, when he says, "I have so much business to do to-day, that I shall not be able to get through it with less than three hours' prayer." Now most people would say, "I have so much business to do to-day that I must only have three minutes' prayer; I cannot afford the time." But Luther thought that the more he had to do the more he must pray, or else he could not get through it. That is a blessed kind of logic: may we understand it! "Praying and provender, hinder no man's journey." If ye have to stop and pray, it is no more an hindrance than when the rider has to stop at the farrier's to have his horse's shoe fastened, for if he went on without attending to that it may be that ere long he would come to a stop of a far more serious kind.

Let us learn from this text our own indebtedness to distinguishing and sovereign grace. You observe, beloved, that the gospel does not come with the power of the Holy Ghost to everybody. If, then, it has come to us, what shall we do but bless and praise the distinguishing grace which made it so to come to us. You observe that the distinction was not in the persons themselves, it was in the way in which the gospel came. The distinction was not even in the gospel, but in the attendant sin, making it effectual. If you have heard the Word with power, it was not, dear brethren, because you were more ready, because you were less inclined to sin, or more friendly towards God. You were an alien, a stranger, a foreigner, an enemy; you were "dead in trespasses and sins," even as others were and are. There was in you, whatever Papists may say, no grace of congruity to meet with the grace of Christ. They say that there is something in man congruous to the grace of God, so that when saving grace comes to those who have the grace of congruity they are saved. In me I know everything was incongruous, everything contrary to God. There was darkness, and light came; there was death, and life entered; there was hatred, and love

drove it out; there was the dominion of Satan, and Christ overcame the traitor.

*“Then give all the glory to his holy name,  
To him all the glory belongs;  
Be yours the high joy still to sound forth his name,  
And praise him in each of your songs.*

A third practical lesson we will but hint at; namely, we see that there are degrees of attainment even among those who have received the Word with the Holy Ghost. Let us seek for the very highest degree. You are not generally satisfied with the same necessities of life, you desire to possess its comforts and luxuries. I will commend you if you carry this into spiritual things. Do not be content merely to be saved, merely to be spiritually alive; ask to be valiant for truth. I should feel it a great honor, I hope, to be the commonest soldier, if called upon to defend my country, but I must confess I should not like to be in the ranks always. I should like at least to be made a corporal very soon, and a sergeant as soon as possible; and I should grumble wonderfully much if I could not rise to rank among the commissioned officers. I should like to be found doing my very best, and I would reach to the most prominent position if I might therein serve my country better than in the ranks. So I think it should be with the Christian. He is not to seek for honor among men, but, if he can by getting more grace be more serviceable to his God and bring more honor to his name, why let him press forward. Ah, my dear brethren, what business have you to be sitting still and saying, “It is enough.” The “rest-and-be-thankful” policy is not much approved of in politics, and in religion it will never answer. On! Forward! Upward! As the eagle takes for its motto, “Superior,” and still mounts higher, and higher, and higher, till the young wing which first trembled at the height has grown into the strong pinion which makes him companion of the sun and playmate with the lightnings, so let the Christian do. If he has learned to “run and not be weary,” let him seek to “mount up as on the wings of eagles.” Onward, fellow-soldier! Be thou yet more valiant till thy name be written among the first three.

To close, does not this text, as a last practical lesson, show us indirectly how a privilege may become a curse? The word of God has come to you all. I suppose there is not one here who has not heard the story of the love of God in Christ Jesus. You have been told many times, that though man has fallen, and offended God, yet the Lord has set forth his suffering Son, Christ Jesus, to be a propitiation for sin, and that through faith in his name,

“Whosoever believeth on him shall never perish.” You have been told that God waiteth to be gracious, and that whosoever looks to Christ shall live, whosoever calleth upon the Lord shall be saved. Now, having heard thins, whatever some may tell you, we feel bound as in the sight of God, to warn you that if this comes “in word only” to you, it will increase your condemnation. Certain preachers think that thin Word is not “a savor of death unto death” to any, but it is, it is. Whatever their theories, whatever hyper-calvinistic theology may say, it is God’s word, that it shall be more tolerable from Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than it shall be for cities like Capernaum and Bethsaida, which heard the Word, and yet repented not. You are not machines; you are not creatures merely to be acted upon, you are to act as well as to be moved; and every good word that reaches your ear is written down as a debt against you. There is no declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ which, if refused, does not leave you more disobedient than you were. Remember how the apostle words it: “Unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.” Now they could not have been disobedient if it was not their duty to obey. No man is disobedient where there is no law. It is, therefore, the duty of every sinner hearing the gospel to believe it, and if he does not, this same stone shall fall upon him and shall grind him to powder. Kiss the Son, therefore, lest he, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little. The same Savior who blesses will be angry. He who loves his people, grows angry with those who reject him; and when his wrath is kindled but a little, woe unto the object of it! Blessed are all they that trust in him, and may we be found among that blessed number to the praise and glory of his grace, wherein he maketh us to differ according to the appointment of his own divine will. May God bless this assembly for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

# SONGS FOR DESOLATE HEARTS.

NO. 649

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 10TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.” — Isaiah 54:1.

IT was a great sorrow to an Eastern woman to be childless. In modern times that affliction is endured with cheerful equanimity, but in those days it was regarded as a dreadful curse, and the feelings of those afflicted by it were of the most painful kind, as we find in the case of Hannah. Alas! for human nature, those who were favored with children were often guilty of cruel haughtiness and taunting derision towards those who were not so blessed; we may instance the case of Peninnah over Hannah, and Hagar over her mistress Sarah. We must therefore endeavor to bring our minds to the Eastern idea, and we shall then have before us a case of very great, deep, constant, abiding, bitter sorrow, and yet the person in that case is bidden to sing, and to rejoice aloud, because the visitation of God’s mercy should soon come to make desolation itself glad.

**I.** The text shall first of all be taken in its reference TO THE CHURCH OF GOD.

For a long season before the coming of Christ the Church of God was desolate. Few were her sons and daughters. Her solemn feast-days were attended by a multitude of hypocrites, and her courts were crowded with formalists, but the genuine children of Israel were sadly few; and when the Lord, the Husband of the Church, himself arrived, the Church was in no

happy condition; and even while he remained with her, her joy was not complete, for Christ's ministry was, with all reverence to his name, it was by his own appointment, doubtless comparatively an unsuccessful one. After all his preaching there were but some hundred and twenty persons who believed on him; "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The children of the married wife were but very, very few. Isaiah's wailing might have been heard all through the life of Christ, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." What a dark night that must have been when the Savior was betrayed by Judas! Ah! Church of God, what will come of thee now? While the Bridegroom was with thee thy children were but few, and now that he is taken away to prison and to death, what wilt thou do? As for thy sons, thou canst not rely upon them. Yonder is Peter, denying his Master with oaths and curses; John — even the loving John — has forsaken him and fled. They have all gone their ways; they have all turned their backs. Like the children of Ephraim, "being armed and carrying bows, they have turned their backs in the day of battle." Alas! for thee, Zion, for now thou art desolate! Thy husband is led away captive; thy sons have forsaken thee: thine hour of mourning has come! Still darker must have been the hour when Salem's daughters wept around the Savior led away to a shameful crucifixion along the *via dolorosa*. See him as he dyes the streets of Jerusalem with blood-drops trickling from his thorn-crowned head. He is taken without the camp to the mount of doom. They fasten him to the wood; they lift him high upon the cross: his enemies compass him about; the bulls of Bashan roar upon him, and the dogs of hell bark about then. Where art thou now, O Zion? Save a few that cluster round the shameful tree, where are thy sons and daughters now? Thy sun has set for ever, and thy candle is gone out in darkness! So unbelief whispers, but not thus speaks the Lord, for after that the Lord had been lain in the grave and risen again and ascended and left the Church, then were the days of refreshing, and the times of the visitation of the Spirit. Suddenly when the saints were met together in an upper room, for they were so few that they could all be enclosed within one room, there was heard a sound as of "a rushing mighty wind," and suddenly flames of fire sat on each chosen one. Then was fulfilled the saying of the prophet Joel, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Rejoice, O Zion; sing thou barren, thou that didst not

hear, for three thousand are thy children in one day, and there are multitudes yet to come. There are added to the Church daily of such as shall be saved; and the multitude increases. Persecution scatters them, but as they scatter they grow: in every land the Church of God has its sons and daughters. Even in the palace of the Caesars truth is confessed. Mountains cannot stay the progress of Messiah's kingdom. Goths and Gauls, uncivilized men of war, feel the potent power of the love of the cross. From eastern coast to western, Jupiter and Venus fall from their thrones, and Jesus Christ is exalted. "From the river even to the ends of the earth" his name is known. Thus you see there was to the whole Church at Jerusalem a glorious fulfillment of this text, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear;" and more were the children of the desolate Church in the absence of her Lord than when she was as a married wife having Jesus Christ the Bridegroom with her.

Although this is a well-known fact, it ought not to be passed over without a little thought, because it is very pleasant to recollect that at all seasons when the Church has been desolate and has become barren, God has appeared to her. In the dark ages when the children of the Church were a little and hidden flock, probably a few monks in monasteries holding a faith which they dared not confess, and feeding it by turning over the Bible in secret, a handful among the mountains of Piedmont, the Albigenses and Waldenses, a few scattered ones among the Nestorians, and a few "even in Sardis" who had not defiled their garments. The poor Church was barren. There were no ministers, or but here and there one to preach the gospel, and these were hunted like partridges upon the mountains by those who thirsted for their blood. She might have taken up her wailing, and her bowels might have sounded like a harp for her ruin and decay. But in her hour of dire necessity, the Lord appeared for her and the children of the desolate were suddenly many. The monk of Wirtemberg began to proclaim the gospel; the mighty seer of Geneva stood up and declared the truth as it is in Jesus, distinctly enunciating the glorious doctrines of grace; Zwingle, full of fire and energy, led on the saints in Switzerland. It is true the stakes began to flame with their victims, the racks were red with the blood of martyrs, and prisons crowded with the elect of God; but what mattered it? The day was come when God had visited his people, and, as in some desperate fight, when suddenly a reinforcement comes with a mighty captain at its head, every man along the line gathers courage, every coward becomes a hero, and every hero seems gifted with a thousand hands, each



hand filled with a two-edged sword, even so it was in that day of struggle and of victory. A song went up from earth even to heaven, “Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; his own right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory!”

Nor has God failed since the days of the Reformation. We in England had gone to sleep. The Church of England was sleeping in the dark, Dissenters were sleeping in the light; that was the only difference between them. There seemed to be no breath of life throughout the whole of England. Spiritual death crept over all ministers and all professors. There were, of course, a few exceptions, but those were, alas! so weak and so isolated that they could effect but little. Six young men were expelled from Oxford for the egregious crime of praying. Among those young men were three destined to carve their names in everlasting rock — the two Wesleys and George Whitefield. These men, little knowing whereunto they were called, preached the Word, first of all in the regular and orderly fashion, but still with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. They were driven by persecution to the gross irregularity of preaching in the open air. Blessed day! Whether they stood on the tombstone and preached to the living from the portals of the grave, or by the mountain-side, calling heaven and earth to witness, it mattered not; the gospel had broken from the chains of lethargic propriety; and what a change, my brethren, came over the spirit of the age! “The Lord gave the Word: great was the multitude of them that published it.” The fire came down from heaven like that of old in Pharaoh’s day, and it ran along upon the ground and consumed the enemies of God. Irresistible as the lightning flash it descended, and none could stand against it, for the day of the Lord was come, and it was a day of burning and a day of might, and blessed be the name of God, “the children of the desolate” were many.

Now we know what has been said concerning the Church of God in England at the present time, and here is the practical lesson I want you to gather. Some of our brethren are perfectly contented: I cannot number myself among those who think that the Church is flourishing, and that vital godliness is abundant. It may be so, brethren, it may be so. I wish I could thoroughly feel satisfied of it. I would not, however, on the other hand, unite myself altogether with the ranks of the alarmists, who say that everything is wrong. The Christian Church, according to some, is nothing but a mass of hypocrisy. We are all going post haste, as fast as ever we can, towards Romanism, and Romanism is next-door to the abode of the devil himself. We are supposed to be going down, down, down a most

precipitous descent. Well, I do not know; it may be so. I wish I was quite sure it was not so. I hardly think it, but I strike the balance between the two, and rejoice with trembling. On this we may all be agreed, there is an abundant room both for mourning because we have not the presence of God as once we had it, and, on the other hand, for a hopeful anxiety that yet our desolation may be turned into fruitfulness. Supposing — taking the worst view of the case — supposing it be so — and I am sure there is very much truth in the supposition — suppose it be so, that the sturdiness with which we once held orthodoxy, is giving place to a trifling latitudinarianism; suppose it to be true that the enthusiasm which once made us worthy to be called fanatics, is gradually dwindling down into indifference; suppose it to be so, that the Puritan rigidity of morals which once made the professing Christian something awful to look upon, is now turning into a looseness and laxity of behavior — well, then, we are like the barren and desolate woman; but, at any rate, we have a promise still to cling to, and we will hold it fast: “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.” Doubt not but that the Lord will appear for his Church even yet. Let not your gloomy apprehensiveness cause your hands to hang down, for in your darkest night God will suddenly light a candle. It may be that he will let wickedness grow ripe, and not send forth the reaper, the ordained man, with the sickle to cut it down, till it is ripe. It may be that he may let iniquity abound, and the love of many may wax cold; but fear not, though he never is before his time, he never is behind; he will come punctually to the moment, in a time which shall be best for his Church, and most for his own glory. Once again we shall hail the happy days of revival, and the seasons of gladness of heart, when “one shall say, I am the Lord’s, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob,” and the children of Zion “shall spring up as willows by the watercourses.” Let us hope and labor; let us lament our desolation; let us expect the gracious visitation, and it shall yet come, and we shall “sing together,” even we, “the waste places of Jerusalem.”

## **II.** I now intend to use the text, as God helps me, in reference to ANY ONE CHURCH

I do not think that what I have to say now will have very special reference to the Church which meets in this place, for we have reason to thank God, that through eleven years or more, we have had about as high a flood-tide

of revival as we could well endure; and I do not know, if God had given us more conversions, what we should have done with them. He has already increased our numbers so marvellously, that we scarcely know how we shall oversee the whole; and it becomes almost a matter of necessity that some should swarm off to form other Churches; but still a part of what is said may, nevertheless, apply to our case; and as there are many brethren and sisters here from the country, and yet, since some twenty or thirty thousand will read these words, I shall not speak without having an audience, even though not a word may belong to the members of this Church.

Let us observe, then, that there are some separate Churches which are in a very sad condition, and may most truly be said to be barren and desolate. Do we not know some in our land which are cursed with a lifeless ministry? a ministry which murders the truth by a drawling, careless utterance of it; a ministry without force or life. Some ministries are not truthful; they may preach part of the truth, but not the whole — ministries, which, from some reason or other, give prominence to one or two doctrines, while other parts of truth, equally precious, are kept back from the people; and the whole of what is preached, is too often delivered in a cold, official, ministerial manner, without passion or earnestness, and so the Church necessarily, I may say, becomes barren. And how many Churches have to complain of worldly Church-officers! We cannot help observing with grief and regret, that certain Church-officers are far more active when they are in the world than they are in the Church, and that if they show some little common sense in conducting their own business, they show little enough in managing Christ's business. They put out both their hands and all their heart when the matter is one of personal gain; but when it is only that the Church of God may be fed, or that the bounds of Zion may be enlarged, they go about it as though it were a thing of no consequence, or but of very small importance. And worse than this, for the Church might still live even with a lifeless ministry, and a worldly deaconship and eldership, but often there is a lifeless membership. How many Churches are there where a large portion of members scarcely think of assembling themselves together for supplication; where, if there be any life, it seems to expend itself in quarrelling and fault-finding. They do not contend earnestly for "the faith once delivered to the saints," against the common foe, but they wrangle over that faith, and make foes of One another. Oh! how many Christians there are that can boast of

respectability, there are no end of carriages at the door; they can talk of the wealth, the large subscriptions which they can give to God's cause, but where is their zeal and the sounding of their bowels over dying men? Where are the tears that move the heart of God? Where are the sighs and cries which bring down a blessing upon the preached Word? Alas! in many of our Churches echo can only answer to the question "Where are they?" with the refrain "Where are they?" for they are gone, and gone so long that some Christians seem content that they should be gone for ever; they scarcely remember the time when they were in earnest, the period when the bedewing of the Holy Ghost rested upon them. I hesitate not to say solemnly that I know in our own denomination there are many, many Churches in such a state of desolation, that if the places, where they worship were closed it would be small loss to the neighbourhoods in which they stand; and if the ministry to which they listen were put out and silenced, it might be almost a gain, for it only enables the people to wrap themselves up in the idea that they are all right, and that they have the Spirit of God among them when they have only the name to live and are dead.

This being their present state, brethren here present this morning, who are in earnest, will ask me what is their present duty as members of such Churches? I reply, brethren, your duty is very plain. Labour to be conscious of the sad barrenness of the Church to which you belong. Has the pool of baptism not been stirred for the last five or six years? will you be easy about that? Have there been no additions to the Church for many months? Can you be satisfied about that? Do you observe an absence of all earnestness, of all passion and vehemence for the promotion of the Savior's kingdom? Can you be quiet about that? If so, my dear friend, I really cannot say anything to you about what you can do, for it seems to me that you are not the person to whom I ought to appeal in this matter. But I will say, do labor, dear brethren, if you are members of Churches that are not prospering, to be conscious of the sad mischief that you are doing. If the salt hath lost its savor it is henceforth good for nothing, it is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill, and men cast it out. We can manage to struggle on with a bad trader, for he may make a good politician or philosopher, but a dead Church is good for nothing, good for nothing of any sort or in any way; it is only fit to be cast out. Even the dunghill rejects a dead Church. Oh! if we did but know it, the existence of the devil is not more pretentious of evil than the existence of a Church that has lost

spiritual life. Mind, I am not exaggerating, for I have a proof of it. What is the Church of Rome in its deadly operation upon the world but the greatest curse that could even come from hell itself? I question if hell can find a more fitting instrument within its infernal lake than the Church of Rome is for the cause of mischief. And your Church will in its measure, be the same if bereft of the Spirit. I do not care if it be Wesleyan, Baptist, Independent, or what it is; when the life is gone it becomes henceforth good for nothing; it is not even fit to manure the ground, as the contents of the dunghill are, but men cast it out and tread it under foot. Get conscious of that, and then let those of you who are humbled in the sight of God, meet together, and spread the case before the Lord. We ought to have great faith in the power of the twos and threes, for "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," saith the Lord. The long thin red line, which has often won the battle, will yet win it in England — I mean the thin line of the few that sigh and cry for the desolations of the Church. If you, my brother, an earnest man, be the only member of the Church that does really sigh and cry before God, God intends to bless that Church yet, for he has already blessed it in sending you to it. Look out for others of a kindred sort, and without murmuring, without raising divisions, without seeking to expel the minister or make any changes in the discipline, just you set to work, arid pray down, as Elias did, the fire from heaven upon the sacrifice. This is the one thing which is wanted. The wrong in organization, the mistakes in government, the unfitness of the Church-officers — all this will come right enough if you once get the divine life; but without this, though you should rectify everything else, you would have done but little to any real purpose. Let me beg of you, therefore, to spread the case before Jehovah, and be sure that you look away from everything that you yourself can do to him, and to him alone. What can the barren woman do? What can she that is desolate do? Why, she can take this promise before God and say, "Thou hast said, 'Sing, O barren' — Lord, make me sing! Thou hast said 'The children of the desolate shall yet be many' — Lord make our children many yet!" The desolate woman can do this, and your poor desolate heart, though you sigh and cry over the fewness of the congregation, and the coldness of the Church-members — your desolate heart can do the same and doing it, you shall get an answer of peace. But mind you do not pray without proving the sincerity of your prayers by action. Do bestir yourself, I have noticed that many who complain of a want of brotherly love, are just the people who have least themselves; and those who see no spiritual life in a Church, are often the

people who have no spiritual life themselves. They see without what they might see within. But I hope I am addressing myself to nobler men than these. You feel that you would not wilfully and willingly make any false accusation against God's saints, nor impeach them for anything wherein they are not guilty. You love the Church too well; you would rather paint her with your finger upon her spots, than' magnify her blemishes. Well, dear brethren, if such be your state of heart, live and labor for Jesus Christ yourselves, and give the Lord no rest till this word of his servant Isaiah be fulfilled to the very letter. This my message may seem to be of no importance to some here present, yet I hope it may be fraught with usefulness to Churches represented here by gracious and godly men.

**III.** By your leave, we will now turn to a third use of our text.

Here the case is before us: **THE POOR HELPLESS SINNER HAS HIS CASE WELL DESCRIBED BY THE PROPHET AS BARREN AND DESOLATE.**

I will speak for you, and you will recognize your own words. "Barren! ah, that I am. I have not one meritorious fruit that I can bring before God. As well might one expect to gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles, as to find any good thing in me. My heart is a fountain of polluted waters, and all that cometh forth deserves to be called Marah! Marah! for every drop is bitter. How is it possible that I can ever hope while I see in myself all that is evil and nothing that is good? Alas! I am not only barren of merit but I am also barren of feeling; I ought to be humbled on account of sin, but I am not. My eye-balls ought to be perpetual conduits of tears, but they are dry. My heart should be like Moses' rock when it was smitten; but alas! it is a flinty rock yielding no water. O that my heart would break. O that I were truly contrite. Unto the contrite and broken heart the Lord will have regard, but I am barren even of that. And alas! I seem to be barren even in prayer. If I get upon my knees I cannot pray. 'God be merciful to me, a sinner,' is as far as I can reach; and I am afraid I am so barren that I cannot even pray that prayer as the publican prayed it, so as to get acceptance. I come down from my closet with the sense that I have tried to pray, but that I have been so distracted both with doubts and with wandering thoughts, that I have rather multiplied my sins than had any prevalence with God. I am commanded to believe in Jesus, and I wish I could exert faith in him.

*'O could I but believe!  
Then all would easy be;  
I would, but cannot — Lord, relieve  
My help must come from thee!'*

I have a will, but I have no power. I can say, 'To will is present with me — and I am thankful to God for that — but 'how to perform that which I would, I find not.' I am barren of merit, barren of feeling, barren of power, barren of prayer, barren of faith. I am barren — barren with a vengeance." Yes, and sinner, it is very probable that I can also speak out your heart if I take the word "desolate." You are desolate, too; no one can comfort you. The friend to whom you told your trouble, tried his best, but he could not succeed in cheering your heavy heart. You have been up to this house sometimes, hoping that I might say a word, but I have only added fuel to the flame, for the truth preached has been far from comfortable to you; it has rather depressed you and brought you lower still. You have listened, you have read good books, you have turned over Scripture, but for all that, there does not seem to be a text that speaks comfortably to you, but the threatenings leap up out of the page, and seem as if they would drag you down, as the dogs dragged down the stag when they seize him for their prey. You are "desolate" as a poor lone wanderer who has lost his way far out in the desert. He looks around upon the horizon, and sees not one single hope or gleam of hope, but far above he sees the cruel vulture, waiting for his lifeless corpse. So is it with you; you see the vultures of hell ready to devour you, and there is no hope, no comfort whatever. You are barren and you are desolate. I will tell you one of your thoughts. You have often envied those whom you would not envy if you knew better. You poor barren souls have often envied "the married wife;" I mean the Pharisee: you have said of him, "Ah, I wish I could say that I was not as other men are; I wish I could say I had not sinned, but had walked in righteousness: 'All these things have I kept from my youth up ' — O that I could say that!" You have heard these married wives, as it were, boast of all their goodness, and you have looked at them and thought, "What blessed people they must be! O that I could see what they can see!" There are some about in the world who preach up human ability, who tell us that men can believe and can repent, and can do all sorts of spiritual actions; and there are some who think they can do them irrespective of the Holy Spirit. Well, then, I do not doubt but what you envy them; you say, "I wish I could feel as So-and-so; I wish I could rejoice as Such-an-one does. Oh! if I could get as good a hope as he has." Hark to this, he is a hypocrite.

“Oh! that I could be as full of peace as he is!” Mark, he is a mere formalist. “Oh! that I had his unbroken peace!” If you had such peace as he has, it would be your eternal ruin.

Poor, barren sinner, let me say this much to you. Your help is to be found, not in your barrenness, not in your desolation; do not look to that as though it ever could help you; your barrenness is barrenness for ever if left to itself, and your desolation is utter and helpless unless someone shall intervene. May I ask you to look at the chapter which precedes my text. I wish the Bible had never been chopped up into chapters at all, it spoils it so; it was not intended by the Holy Ghost that it should be; that is human device; if you read it right on you see how it runs; “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” You know how it continues till it gets to this: “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. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child.” Do you see the drift of it? Jesus has taken the sinner’s sin upon himself, and made a complete atonement; therefore, “sing, O barren.” The mighty Redeemer has come out of his dwelling-place, and has fought the enemy, and won the victory. “Sing, O barren.” Sin can be pardoned now, for Christ hath died. “Sing, O barren!” Sinfulness can be conquered now, for Christ hath won the victory over the hosts of hell. Thou barren one! all barren as thou art, stand here and see that wondrous sight. He comes from Edom “with garments dyed in blood.” Canst thou see the blood upon his vestures? It is red as though he had trodden the wine vats. Canst thou see that blood? It is the blood of all thy sins. They are gone! They are gone! O desolate! they are gone! The blood of all thy foes—they are slain! O barren woman! they are slain! And now he comes who vanquished hell. Can he not rescue thee? “The prey shall he taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall he delivered;” and though thou stood bound in iron surrounded with darkness about thee like that of Egypt, “which might he felt,” he could set thee free.



*“He comes the prisoners to release,  
In Satan’s bondage held;  
The gates of brass before him burst,  
The iron fetters yield.”*

Your hope is in a bleeding Savior who is now ascended up on high to receive gills for men. Surely I myself will lead the strain, while I ask you now, ye barren one, to sing. Break forth into singing and cry aloud, for your Redeemer is mighty and will save. Whereas you envied the Pharisee, you shall have greater joy than he. “More are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife.” Whereas you envied the proud man who said, “I can do this, and I can do the other,” you who could do nothing because you were so barren, shall be filled with such love, and endowed with such grace, you shall be admitted into such familiarity with Christ, such oneness with God, such glory with him for ever, that your joy, your glory, shall be far greater than the married wife could claim. I pray the sinner as he bears these gladsome words, to be obedient to them. Trust thou in the Savior, and “Thou shalt go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and thine hills shall break forth before thee into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

#### **IV.** Does not this text, in the fourth place, belong to the DEPRESSED BELIEVER?

Here, as before, I can speak experimentally. Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, you and I, though we have brought forth some fruit unto his name, and are still confident that we are “plants of his own right hand planting,” yet sometimes feel very barren. I hope you do not feel it so often as I do. There are occasions when, having preached to others, I have to examine myself, “lest I myself should be a castaway.” I would, if I could, always weep for the sins and for the ruin of rebellious men. I would always feel tenderness of heart on account of those who reject his great salvation. But sometimes I am barren of all this. I feel my heart cold as a stone, and hard as a rock. Do you never feel, brethren, when you try to pray, you that have nearest access to God, that there are times when you cannot pray? You would wrestle with the angel, but it is as much as ever you can say, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” You want to love Christ, but instead of a furnace of love, you can only find a sparkle in your soul. Oh! how you want to burn, how you desire to glow to mount, to reach to something higher and better than this poor dead level of a mere profession, but you

cannot get up to it. O dew of heaven, water my dry branch! O river of God, flow hard by my poor barren root! for if not, I shall be always barren. Have you not often felt desolate? I know the righteous man never is desolate, but still he sometimes thinks himself so. His soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and he refuseth to be comforted. He was no bad man who said, "I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop;" for those who have looked the sun in the face have nevertheless sometimes had to say, "Look not on me, for I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." Depressions of spirit, humiliating thoughts of one's self, deep and grievous bondage, all these the children of God are well aware of; for within Paul, we have at times to cry. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Beloved, it is well for us to know, as I am sure we do know experimentally, that in this matter of barrenness and desolation, the creature can do but little. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth little. When we get into this state, then we feel like a man who cannot swim, and the more we kick and struggle the more rapidly we sink. It seems as if all human energy were but the energy to sin, and a power to make us yet more dead to true spiritual life. Well, what are we to do then? Why, let us remember that the text is addressed to us in just such a state. "Sing, O barren, break forth and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child." But what can I sing about? I cannot sing about the present; I cannot even sing concerning the past. Well, but yet I can sing of Jesus Christ, can I not? I can turn to that which precedes the text, and I can sing of visits which the Redeemer has aforesaid paid to me; or, if not of these, I can sing of the great love wherewith he loved his people when he came from the heights of heaven for their redemption. I will go to the cross again. Come, my soul, heavy laden thou wast once, and thou didst lose thy burden there. Come again, come again. Once thou didst wash in yonder fount, and thou wast clean. O my poor bespattered spirit, come and wash again. A prodigal I once returned; he fell upon my neck and kissed me then. I will go to Jesus yet once more. Though my sins rise like mountains, I will be obedient to the word which saith, "Return, ye backsliding children, for I am married unto you, saith the Lord." What is my barrenness? It is the platform for his Divine power. What is my desolation? It is the black setting for the sapphire of his everlasting love. I will go in poverty, I will go in helplessness, I will go in all my shame and backsliding, I will tell him that I am still his child, and in confidence in his faithful heart,

even I, the barren one, will sing and cry aloud. Beloved, I think this is a very delightful text for us to think upon, especially when we remember that the joy of hardened hearts is, by-and-by, greater than the joy of those who never did feel their barrenness so much. There are some Christians that seem to be like the married wife; they have an equable temperament, they are not much depressed, they keep the even tenor of their way. I know I often envy them. We have our ups and downs, but mark you, when our ups come, those who despised us when we were in the downs, might very well envy us. Though the valleys be dark and very gloomy, yet oh! the hill-tops; the bill-tops are so bright, that when the Lord makes our feet to stand upon our high places, we no longer envy the married wife with all her ordinary calm and peace. We will take our trails for the sake of our joys; for as our tribulations abound, so our consolations abound in Christ Jesus.

**V.** And now, lastly, it strikes me that our text ought to have a very special voice **TO THOSE CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN DOING GOOD.**

As a Church, I am sure it is our unanimous desire that we might bring forth spiritual children unto Christ Jesus. I hope I have not a single member of this Church who is content to go to heaven alone. As far as I know you, I believe there is commonly among you this desire, that you may bring sinners to Christ. Now, it is possible that some dear brethren and sisters present, have not yet been successful. You have been at work; you have been in prayer; you have depended upon Christ in simple faith and hoped for his Spirit, but still you have been denied the happy privilege of being made useful. Well, now, two or three words to you. You are barren, and I am glad that while you are barren, your heart feels desolate, for you will not be barren long if you are unhappy in your barren state. Now, my dear friends, it may be possible that you are only barren in your own esteem. It is possible that God may have blessed you to many, thought you think he has never blessed you to one. There may be somewhere precious jewels, which you first brought up from the depths of sin — thought you have not seen them glisten, Christ has; and though you thought you did not succeed the other day in your attempt, it is just possible that you are not a good judge of your own success. Frequently I have gone home groaning over a sermon which God has blessed to never-dying souls; and those very discourses which I have thought thine worst of; God has blessed the most. I think we are no judges of how we do our work that the Master knows better than we do the success of our enterprises. Beside, dear friends, you

do not expect to see fruit at once, do you? “Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it to-morrow “ — is that the text? If I read rightly it is, “Thou shalt find it after many days.” You have not had thine “many days” to wait yet. The husbandman, when he plants the corn, may plough in October or November, but he does not expect to have a harvest in January; he will wait till the season comes. And you husbandmen of thine Lord, must wait and be patient for the precious fruits of your toil: “In due season you shall all reap if you faint not.” Therefore wait on. Perhaps, however, your barrenness really is true, and if so, ought not this greatly to humble you? You were not always barren, my brethren — when you were fruitful, did you give God all the glory? Were you very careful not to say, “Well done, I”? Possibly this barrenness has come upon you to make you feel your nothingness, and to qualify you from yet greater success. It often happens that before God means to bless his servants, he depresses them very greatly. Whether or not it is absolutely necessary, I cannot tell; but this I know, it is generally the rule that there is a flogging behind the door for the man whom God means to honor in public; he will give him a thorn in the flesh either before or after he gives him marvellous revelations. Dear friend, perhaps this is the reason. Well, you say, “I do not know what the reason is, but I wish I could be rid of it, for I cannot bear to be useless, to be a tree cumbering the ground.” My dear brother, I am thrice glad to hear you say that, because now that you are really ashamed of being barren, you will be fruitful soon; and now that God makes you loathe to be without fruit, he will soon cover you with precious clusters. One thing is certain, you cannot alter your being barren; you cannot yourself change your barrenness into fruitfulness; but is it not significant that my text should stand just after the passage to which I have invited your attention just now? Just after the story of the despised and in-ejected Savior, stands this note of joy for you poor barren ones. Let nine invite you, then, to come to the cross. Perhaps that very cross which gave you life, may give you fruitfulness. You have found help there before, may you not find vigor there now? Brethren and sisters, my fellow-workers for Christ Jesus, let us look up and view the flowing of the Savior’s precious blood. Let us see the chastisement of our peace as it falls in cruel blows upon his blessed shoulders. Let us see the scourging; let us mark the blood-drops as they roll down to the ground, and what do we feel but this? — “Now for the love I bear his name. Yes, and I must and will esteem what was may gain I count my loss, all things but loss for Jesus’ sake. My former pride I call my

shame, O may my soul he found in him, And nail my glory to his cross.  
And of his righteousness partake.”

O beloved, theme is nothing like a sight of the Savior. I have heard of a minister who was ready to give up his work, but he fell asleep and dreamed that he saw the thorn-crowned Redeemer reaping with a sweat of blood upon his face, Thine crucified One said to him as he saw him standing idly by, “Couldst thou not reap with me one hour?” He seized a sickle and worked on, and on, and on, with the crucified One at his side, and his strength grew as he continued at his work. O servants of God, will ye depart from your work when the pierced hand is at your side? Courage! my brethren, courage! We cannot fail, for Christ is with us; and we must not cease, for Jesus ceases not. Together let us praise thine Lord that he has sent us this morning such a girdle to gird about our loins, to make us strong even to the end. “Sing O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than thine children of the married wife, saith the Lord.” The Lord grant it may be so to us for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

# JUDGMENT THREATENING BUT MERCY SPARING.

NO. 650

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 17TH, 1865,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground. And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also.” — Luke 13:7, 8.*

THE comparison of a man to a tree, and of human works to fruit, is exceedingly common in Scripture, because it is most suggestive, natural, and appropriate. As fruit is the production of the tree's life, and the end for which the tree exists, so obedience to the divine will, and holiness unto the Lord, should be the product of man's life, and for it he was at first created. When men plant trees in a vineyard, they very naturally expect to find fruit thereon; and if at the age and season of fruitbearing they find no produce, their natural and justifiable expectation is disappointed. Even thus, speaking after the manner of men, it is natural that the great Maker of all should look for the good fruit of obedience and love from the men who are the objects of his providential care, and be grieved when he meets with no return. Man is very much more God's property than a tree can ever be the property of the man who plants a vineyard; and as God has spent so much more skill and wisdom in the creation of a man than a husbandman can have spent in the mere planting of trees, it becomes the more natural that God should look for fruit from his creature, man; and the more reasonable that his most righteous requirements should not be refused. Trees that bring not forth fruit must be cut down; and sinners who bring not forth repentance, faith, and holiness, must die. It is only a matter of time as to whether or not the vineyard shall be cleared of the incumbrance of its barren trees; it is but a matter of time as to when the world shall be delivered from the burdensome presence of barren souls. It stands to

reason that barren trees which soon become the haunts of all sorts of mischief-doing creatures, should be a nuisance to the vineyard; neither can sinners be permitted for ever to become the dwelling-places of evil spirits, and the dens of iniquity: a thorough riddance must be made of impenitent sinners as well as of rotten trees. There is a time for felling fruitless trees, and there is an appointed season for hewing down and casting into the fire the useless sinner.

**I.** We shall not linger on the threshold of our solemn work this morning, for our burden is very heavy, and we would fain be rid of it speedily. We shall address ourselves at once to those persons who are living without God and without Christ, among whom many of my hearers must be numbered. We shall speak to those who are not saved: there are such in the professing Church everywhere, O may the Holy Spirit find them out by our word, and bring them in real earnest to consider their ways. To all unprofitable, unfruitful sinners, we utter this hard, but needful sentence: **TO CUT YOU DOWN WOULD BE MOST REASONABLE.** It is right and reasonable to fell barren trees, and it is just as right and reasonable that you should be cut down.

**1.** This will appear in the first place, if we reflect, that this is the shortest and the surest way to deal with you; it will cost the least trouble, and be most certainly effectual in removing you from the place to which you are an injury rather than a benefit. When the owner of the vineyard says to the gardener concerning the tree, "Cut it down," the remedy is very sharp, but it is very simple; the felling is soon done, the clearance is thorough, and when another tree is planted the benefit is evident. To dig about the tree, to trench it, to dung it, to prune it, and water it; all this is a long affair, requiring care, and labor, and attention, while after all, the process may fail and love's labor may be lost. To spare is difficult and involves trouble; to cut down is easy and effectual. Unconverted hearer, to preach the gospel to you, to call you to repentance, to entreat, exhort, instruct, and warn you, is a laborious process, and will probably be unsuccessful after all. The work will require much thought; providential agencies must be directed with wisdom, saints must pray with earnestness, ministers must plead with tears, the Scriptures must be written, and those Scriptures must be expounded and explained; all this is more than thou hast any natural right to expect that God should do with thee, when he has in his hands a far simpler remedy by which he may at once ease himself of his adversary, and prevent thy being any further offense: he has but to take away thy breath

and permit thy body to descend into the grave and thy soul into hell, and the vineyard is clear, and there is room for another tree. This sharp, short, simple process, is one which commends itself to men in the case of trees, and it is one which it is a thousand wonders that the Lord has not used with thee. There will be no more blaspheming God, sinner, when the axe has laid thee low! There will be no more rejecting the promise of his mercy, no more violating of Sabbath days, no more despising Scripture, when the day of doom arrives! Death shall end all these abominations for ever. We shall no more have to agonize for you in vain, no more shall we weep bitterly because of your hardness of heart, no longer study to meet your objections, and sigh at your constant oppositions; the flames of hell will end all this, to your sad and awful cost. No longer will a longsuffering God be wearied with your sins, and pressed down under the load of your iniquities. He will make short work in righteousness, and a clean work too. He will sweep you away with the besom of destruction, and your rebellions will have an end, and your iniquities a reward most sure and terrible. Barren fig-tree, you will draw the fatness from the ground no longer, and overshadow with evil influence your fellow trees no more. You are become a mere waste, and worse than a waste. Sinner, I ask you, is not the readiest plan to be rid of you suggested by the text, Cut it down"? You yourself would do thus with a tree; what reason is there why the Lord should not deal thus with you?

Do you argue that you are of far greater importance than a tree? How do you make this appear? A tree is far more valuable to you than you can be supposed to be to the infinite God. The gardener would lose something possibly by cutting down his tree, but how canst thou suppose that thy ruin would be any damage to the great God! The man who has many acres of vineyard is not much distressed if one barren vine be cut down; for there are so many more. If God had but one man in his dominions, it might seem to be of importance whether that man were saved or not; but there are so many of our race that your loss will be no more than the blowing of one atom of sand from the shore, or the removal of one drop from the sea. You yourself could not well complain of being cut down, for you do not think much of your own soul; you are not concerned about its salvation; you trifle with its best interests. Why should you expect another to value you at a higher rate than you have set upon yourself? You fling away your soul for passing joys; you neglect the great salvation; you live in daily disobedience against God, who alone can do you good; even the preaching



of the gospel, that all-powerful engine, seems to have no effect upon you, because you despise your own self. Well, man, if God despises you too, and commands his angels to cut you down, you cannot complain: it is but reasonable that God should estimate you at your own price, and weigh you in your own balances. You have wantonly used the axe to yourself on many occasions, why should not the proper executioner use it in earnest? Some men ruin their health by their sins; they wildly dash the axe against their own root, and wound themselves terribly. On your soul you are using that axe continually, for you damage it by sin, and seek out folly, audehoose the way to damnation, and labor to be lost. You cannot, therefore, complain. The crushing of you will be of no more consequence in this great universe than the killing of some one emmet upon the hill. You will never be missed. You may think greatly of yourself, but you are no more than a mere worm compared with the great universe of God. Beware, O rebellious, unrepentant sinner! My love yearns for your salvation, but my reason approves of your ruin, foresees it, and expects it speedily except you turn unto the Lord and live.

**2.** Another reason makes the argument for judgment very powerful, namely, that sufficient space for repentance has already been given. If there had been any hope of your repentance, methinks many of you would have repented long ago. I do not know what can be done for some of you more than has been done. You have been digged about — the digging, I suppose, is to loosen the roots of their hold upon the earth — and you have had affliction, trial, and trouble, like the gardener's great spade, to wean you from earth, and loosen your hold of carnal things; you have had sickness — you have tossed to and fro upon the bed of pain; you have been in the jaws of death, and the horrid teeth seemed above and beneath you, as though they would enclose you for ever; but all this has been of no avail. Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more. Already some of you have been smitten until your whole head is sick, and your whole heart faint, but you will not hear the rod. By the blueness of the wound, says Solomon. the heart is made better, but in your case it has not been so. Those blue wounds of yours, those great and grievous afflictions, have not been sanctified to you, but rather you have gone on offending against God, and provoking the Most High.

The gardener spoke of dunging as well as of digging, and some of you have had plentiful helps towards repentance. The gospel has been put close by your roots, hundreds of times; you have a Bible in every house; you

have, some of you, had the advantage of godly training from your youth up. You have been warned again, and again, and again, sometimes sternly, sometimes affectionately; you have heard the wooing voice of mercy, and the thundering notes of judgment; but yet, though Jesus Christ's own gospel has been laid close to your root, O barren tree, you are barren still. What is the use then of sparing you?. Sparing has been tried, and it has had no effect: the other remedy is certain — "Cut it down." O God, cut not down the sinner! and yet we dare not say it would be unreasonable, but on the contrary, the most natural result of slighted mercy. O sinner, you may well say — "I have long withstood his grace,

*Long provoked him to his face;  
Would not hearken to his calls;  
Grieved him by a thousand falls.  
Depths of mercy! can there be  
Mercy still reserved for me?  
Can my God his wrath forbear?  
Me, the chief of sinners spare?"*

**3.** Sinner, I argue thy case somewhat harshly, thou thinkest. Ah! man, would God I could make thee think me harsh, if thou wouldst but have pity on thine own soul, for my harshness is only apparent, not real, and thy carelessness for thy soul is real harshness, for thou carest not for thine own soul, but treatest it as a thing to be cast away, and its ruin to be laughed at, as though it were contemptible. All this while there has been no sign of improvement whatever in thee. If there had been some little fruit, if some tears of repentance had been flowing from thine eyes, if there had been some seeking after Christ, if thine heart had been a little softened, if thou hadst but a little faith in Jesus, though it were but as a grain of mustard seed, then there were indeed reasons for sparing thee; but, sorrowful to add, thy sparing has had an ill effect upon thee. Because God hath not punished thee, therefore thou hast waxed wanton and bold; thou hast said, "Doth God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?" Thou thinkest that he is altogether such an one as thou art, and that he will never bring thee into judgment. Thou fanciest that his sword is rusted into the scabbard, and his arm waxed short. Strange madness of evil, that thou shouldst pervert the longsuffering which calls thee to repentance into a reason for running to greater lengths of sin! What, when Jehovah spares thee that thou mayst turn to him, shall that very sparing make thee lift up the foot of thy rebellion and spurn him? It has done so. Up to this time

thou hast grown hardened instead of softened. Thou hast grown older, but thou art no wiser, except it be with Satan's subtlety to be more wise in sin. The gospel has not now the effect it had once on thee. This voice could make thy soul shiver and thy very blood chill in its veins, but it cannot do so now. These eyes have sometimes looked on thee and seemed as though they flashed with fire, but now they are dull as lead to thee. Once, when we spoke to thee of the wrath to come, the tears would flow: there were some tears of gentle pity for thine own soul; but ah! it is not so with thee now. You will go your 'way, and our most earnest tones will seem but as the whistling wind, and our most importunate entreaties as a child's playful song.

O God, it is reasonable indeed that thou shouldst uplift that sharp axe of thine and say, "Cut it down." I think I could abundantly justify the severity of God, if now he were to use it, when I thus perceive that all his sparing has had no effect but to make you worse, when I perceive that, notwithstanding these years of waiting, there are no tokens of improvement. If he saith, "Cut it down," justice and reason say, "Ay, Lord, it is well it should be so."

**4.** But there are other reasons why "Cut it down" is most reasonable, when we consider the owner and the other trees. First of all, here is a tree which brings forth no fruit whatever, and therefore is of no service. It is like money badly invested, bringing in no interest; it is a dead loss to the owner. What is the use of keeping it? The dead tree is neither use nor ornament: it can yield no service and afford no pleasure. Cut it down by all manner of means. And even so with thee, sinner; what is the use of thee? Thou art of use to thy children, to thy family; in business thou mayst be of some service to the world; but then the world did not make thee; and thy children, and thy family, they did not create thee. God has made thee, God has planted thee, God is thy proprietor — thou hast done nothing for God. Even in coming up to his house to-day, you did not come with any desire to honor God; and to-morrow, if you should chance to give something to the poor, it will not be because they are God's, nor out of love to him. You neither pray to God, nor praise God, nor live for God; you live for anything, for everything, for nothing, sooner than live for the God that made you. Then what is the good of you to God? All his other creatures praise him. There is not a spider spinning its web from leaf to leaf but doth his bidding. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;" but thou dost not know. Wouldst thou keep a horse that never did thee service? Wouldst

thou have a dog in thy house that never licked thy hand or fawned upon thee, or did thy will? Thou wouldst say, "What is the good of this? A servant in my house to feed upon my bread, to be clothed with my bounty, and yet never to obey me, but to live in constant reckless disregard of my most reasonable commands!" You would say to such a servant, "Get thee gone; thou art no servant of mine." Well might the Lord say this of thee. All these years preserving goodness has winked at the past; longsuffering has borne with thy follies and thy faults, but it cannot be so for ever, for reason demands that a useless thing should not always stand, and "Cut it down," is the natural inference from the uselessness of thy life. Nor is this all. While you have been thus living without yielding anything, you have been a very costly tree. The tree in the vineyard does not cost much except to dig about it, and to dung it, and to prune it. There is, of course, the expense of the gardener who has to watch over it, but this is very little. You may let the barren tree stand, for it is no great expense; but see what it costs to keep thee! Thou hast to be daily fed. The breath in thy nostrils must come from God every moment. There has to be an emanation from omnipotence at every single tick of that clock, or else thou wouldst not live. The complicated machinery of the human body needs to be tended and kept in order by the great Master-Craftsman, or else ere long the cogs would cease to act upon one another, and the wheels would be broken, and the whole machinery would be put out of gear. Thy body is a ham of thousand strings. and fails if one be gone. The good harpist must watch with sedulous care to prevent the strings from snapping. Thou costest God much patience, much bounty, much skill, much power. Wherefore should he spare thee? What is there in thee, that he should go on with thee in this manner? Thou wouldst not, spare the gnat that was always stinging thee, buzzing in thy face, and every moment insulting thee. If it cost thee much of thy poor gold to spare that poor gnat's life, thou wouldst not be long about it; thou wouldst crush it. And oh! it is a marvel that Jehovah does not deal thus with thee, for thou art more it pertinent than that gnat could be. Sinner, if you were in God's place, and were as ill-treated by your creature, as the Lord is by you, would you lavish love and goodness upon him, to receive hardness of heart and rebellion in return? Assuredly not. Judge then whether it be not right that the Lord should say, "Cut it down."

But there is a worse consideration, namely, that all this while you have been filling up a space which somebody might have been filling to the glory of God. Where that barren tree stands there might have been a tree loaded

with fruit. You are cumbering the ground, as the text says, that is, doing nothing but just being a cumbersome nuisance. If another mother had those children, she would pray for them and weep over them, and teach them of Christ, but you do no such thing. If another man had that money it would be laid out for God's glory, and you lay it out for your own pleasure and forget the God who gave it to you. If another had sat in that seat which you occupy, it may be that he had long ago repented in sackcloth and ashes; but you, like the men of Capernaum, have been hardened instead of being softened under the gospel. It may be, man of influence, if another had stood where you have stood in the world's judgment, he would have led hundreds in the path of right, but you, standing there, have done no such thing. Oh! if another had your gifts, young man, he would not be making a company laugh at the tavern, but pleading with all his might for Jesus. If another had but your gifts of utterance, he would be spending in prayer and teaching what you now spend in fun and frolic to make amusement for fools. Oh! if another had that time to live in, he would live in earnest for his Master. If that young saint, just going through the flood, had your health and vigor, how would he spend and be spent! I recollect a minister of Christ who had but one talent, but much heart, I remember hearing him pray this prayer: "O God, I wish I had ten talents, that I might serve thee better. When I think of some that have them, and do not serve thee with them, I am inclined to pray, "Lord take away their ten talents, and trust me with them if thou wilt, for I do desire to have something more to lay out for thee." Take heed, O my dear but sinful hearer lest the Lord remove thee suddenly, and fill up thy place with one who will be obedient to his will. Moreover, and to make bad worse even to the worst degree, all this while ungodly men are spreading an evil influence. Thinking over the two lines of the verse we have been singing, I felt a horror of great darkness as I realized fully their solemn truthfulness with regard to some of you.

*"I have shed his precious blood,  
Trampled on the Son of God;  
Filled with pains unspeakable  
I who yet am not in hell."*

Well may the question arise — "Whence to me this waste of love?"

It is so apparently a waste of longsuffering and mercy that some transgressors should be spared at all, that they may well marvel. Look at it, and I think you will see it very clearly so, the very fact that God does not punish sin on the spot is mischievously interpreted. Men in all ages have

drawn a wicked inference from the patience of the great Judge. The Preacher, in Ecclesiastes, says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." "Why," you say, "So-and-so drinks and swears, and he has lived to be a hale, hearty old man. Such an one has plunged into all sorts of folly and wickedness; he was a thief, and everything bad besides, and yet he prospers in the world and grows rich. Instead of God sinking him down at once to hell, he has favored him, and fattened him as a bullock in rich pasture. "Oh," the worldling says, "there is no justice in God. He does not punish sin." The very fact that you are spared, O sinner, is doing mischief in the world. Do you see that? Your mere existence in this world is to others an inducement to continue in sin; for while you are spared, others look at you and say, "God has not punished him." Therefore they infer that he will not punish sin at all.

Moreover, how many there are of you whose example is fearfully contagious; whose lips and lives combine to lead your associates astray from God. In this dreadful murrain which has ravaged our fields and destroyed the cattle, farmers have been advised, as soon as ever the cow is attacked with the disease, to kill it on the spot, and bury it five feet deep out of the way. Let us reflect that the murrain of sin is much more pestilential and more certain to kill than this murrain among the cattle, and therefore stern justice cries, "Let the sinner be at once sent where he cannot increase the plague of iniquity: it is of no use sparing him; he grows no better; all the means used only make him worse, and meanwhile we must look to the welfare of others, lest he perish not alone in his iniquity. He teaches his children to swear; he makes others worldly; the whole current of his life is to incite men to rebel against God: let his desperate course be stopped at once. The leprosy is upon him, and all that he touches he pollutes: for high sanitary reasons, therefore, he must be removed." It is better that one die than that many should be smitten, and therefore, the highest consideration for the good of mankind in general renders it necessary that the mandate should go forth, "Cut it down."

**II.** The second most solemn work is to remind thee, O impenitent sinner, that FOR GOD TO HAVE SPARED YOU SO LONG IS A VERY WONDERFUL THING. That the infinitely just and holy God should have spared you, unconverted man, unconverted woman, up till now, is no small timing, but a matter for adoring wonder.

Let me show you this. Consider, negatively, God is not sparing you because he is insensible towards your sins: he is angry with the wicked every day. If the Lord could be indifferent towards sin, and could bring his holy mind to treat it as a mere trifle, then it would be no wonder that he should let the transgressor live; but he cannot endure iniquity — all the day long his anger smokes and burns towards evil, and yet he holds back the thunderbolt, and does not smite the guilty. If you had been angry half-an-hour, you would have come to hard words or blows; but here is the Judge of all the earth angry every day for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, or eighty years with some of on, and yet he has not smitten. It is not because the offense is at a distance, and therefore far from his observant eye; no — your sins are like smoke in his nose; your iniquities provoke him to his face; you touch the apple of his eye, and yet, for all that, though this accursed thing called sin intrudes into his presence every instant, yet still he has spared you until now. Mark, sinner, he has spared you not because he was unable to have destroyed you. He might have bidden the tiles fall from the roof, or the fever might have smitten you in the street; the air might have refused to heave your lungs, or the blood might have ceased its circulation in your veins. The gates to death are mammy. The quiver of judgment is full of sharp arrows. The Lord has but to will it, and your soul is required of you. He said to the foolish rich man, “This night thy soul shall be required of thee,” and he never saw the morning; and he might as easily have sent the same sad message to you, and what then? As I have said before, this great patience is not manifested towards your sinful soul because the Lord is at all dependent upon you; your living will not increase, and your dying will not diminish his glory. You will be no more missed than one sere leaf is missed in a forest, or one dewdrop in a thousand leagues of grass. Judgment needs but a word to work its utmost vengeance, and withal you are so provoking that the marvel is that divine severity has spared you so long. Admire and wonder at this longsuffering.

Remember that this wonder is increased, when you think of the fruit he deserved to have had of you. A God so good and so gracious, ought to have been loved by you. He has treated you so well, and given you such capacities for pleasure, that he ought to have had some service of you. You are not to God precisely what the ox is to its owner — you give to the ox but his grass or his straw, and you have done with him; but God gives to you not only your daily food, but your very life — you are wholly

dependent upon him. Nothing can be so much yours as you are God's. You ought to have served him, to have delighted in that service, to spend and to have been spent for your Lord. He asks no more of you than he ought to have had, and yet he asks you to love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your strength — this was his first and great commandment, but this you have constantly, persistently broken. Oh, think then, when you have given to God such a bad return, when he ought to have received so much better — think, I pray you, how you must have provoked him.

And ah, my hearers! I have to touch upon a very solemn part of the business now, when I notice again that some, perhaps here present, have been guilty of very God-provoking sins. Some offenses provoke God much more than others — I believe that cursing does, for it is wanton insolence, by which nothing can be gained. It is altogether a gratuitous piece of insult. To swear, to imprecate the curse of God upon one's limbs and souls, is an unnecessary, supernumerary sin. There cannot be any pleasure in pronouncing oaths, any more than in uttering any other form of words. It is just because man will hate his Maker, and will provoke him, that he does this. O sinner, did you ever ask God to damn you, and are you not astonished that he has not done it? Did you ever desire that the blast should come upon you, and do you not marvel that he has not long ago swept you where his wrath would wither you for ever? Swearing is a sin that provokes the Most High. O sinner, abhor this most detestable of vices. Infidelity, again, and how many are guilty of that? How provoking to God for a man to deny his very existence; standing up and breathing God's air and living upon God's life, and yet saying that there is no God. An insignificant worm dares challenge the Almighty to prove his Godhead and existence by a tremendous act of justice. This is a God-provoking sin.

So again is persecution. There may be some here present who have persecuted wife and child because of their following Christ. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye," saith God. Beware, sinner, you will not touch the Lord's eye long without feeling his heavy hand. If any man injures your children the blood is in your cheek at once, if you are a father, and you feel that you will show yourself strong in their defense, even so the heavenly Father will avenge his own elect. Therefore, take heed lest thou persevere in this heaven-provoking sin.



And slander, too, lying against God's servants, inventing and spreading wicked tales against those who walk in God's fear, this is another evil which awakes the anger of God, and stirs up righteous fury against the man who is guilty of it. Beware! beware!

Filthiness, filthiness of body and of life, will also provoke the Most Holy One. This once brought hell out of heaven upon Sodom; God sent down fire and brimstone because of the lusts of the flesh that made Sodom to stink in his nostrils; the harlot and the adulterer and the fornicator, shall know that they sin not without provoking God very terribly.

And let me add here among these God-provoking sins, there is that quenching of conscience of which some of you have been guilty. Ah, my dear hearers, there are not many of you to whom I spoke under these first heads, for I know that very few of you would indulge in these grosser sins; but there are some of you quite as bad in another sense, for you know the right and choose the wrong; you hear of Christ and do not give your hearts to him. We had hoped of some of you that long ere this we should have seen you walking in the Lord's fear. but you are still strangers to Christ. You must have had hard work to do this. You must have had a terrible tug with conscience, some of you; I know you have been stifling many a holy desire, and when the Spirit of God has been striving with you, you have been so desperately set on mischief, that still you have gone on in the error of your ways. Now these sins provoke God. I do not believe that I stand in this pulpit and plead with you in God's name, and then go back and tell my Master that you have rejected his warnings, without God's being angry with your hardness of heart and stiffneckedness. I know if we send an Ambassador to a foreign court to try and make peace, and he honestly and earnestly lays down proper stipulations for peace, if they are rejected, you will soon find the newspapers and public opinion ringing with indignation. "Why," they say, "will not the men have peace when the terms are so reasonable? Get out the iron-dads, let them have war-war to the knife. If they will not yield to what is reasonable, thus let us dress ourselves in thunder, and go forth across the sea." And what think you. Shall God be always provoked? Shall mercy be preached to you for ever in vain? Shall Christ be presented and always rejected, and will you continue to be his enemies, and shall he never proclaim war against your souls? It is a marvel, it is a wonder that these God-provoking sins have so long been borne with, and that you are not yet cut down.

### III. And now, WHAT IS THE REASON FOR ALL THIS LONGSUFFERING?

Why is it that this cumber-ground tree has not been cut down? The answer is, because there is one who pleads for sinners. I have shown you, and some of you will think I have shown you with very great severity too, how reasonable it is that you should be cut down. I wish you felt it, for, if you felt how reasonable it was that God should send you to hell, then you would begin to tremble, and there would be some hope of you. I can assume you I have trembled for you, when I have thought how rational, how just, nay, it would seem to me, how necessary it was that some of you should be lost — it has made me tremble for you — and I would to God you would tremble for yourselves. But what has been the secret cause that you have been kept alive? The answer is, Jesus Christ has pleaded for you, the crucified Savior has interfered for you. And you ask me “Why?” I answer, because Jesus Christ has an interest in you all. We do not believe in general redemption, but we believe in every word of this precious Bible, and there are many passages in the Scripture which seem to show that Christ’s death had an universal bearing upon the sons of men. We are told that he tasted death for every man. What does that mean? Does it mean that Jesus Christ died to save every man? I do not believe it does, for seems to me that everything which Christ intended to accomplish by the act of his death he must accomplish or else he will be disappointed, which is not supposable. Those whom Christ died to save I believe he will save effectually, through his substitutionary sacrifice. But did he in any other sense die for the rest of mankind? He did. Nothing can be much more plain in Scripture, it seems to me, than that all sinners are spared as the result of Jesus Christ’ death. and this is the sense in which men are said to trample on the blood of Jesus Christ. We read of some who denied the Lord that bought them. No one who is bought with blood for eternal salvation ever tramples on that blood; but Jesus Christ has shed his blood for the reprieve of men that they may be spared, and those who turn God’s sparing mercy into an occasion for fresh sin, do trample on the blood of Jesus Christ. You can hold that doctrine without holding universal redemption, or without at all contradicting that undoubted truth, that Jesus laid down his life for his sheep, and that where he suffered he suffered not in vain. Now, sinner, whether thou knowest it or not, thou art indebted to him that did hang upon the tree, for the breath that is now in thee. Thou hadst not been on praying ground and pleading terms with God this morning if it had not been for that dear suffering one. Our text represents the gardener as only

asking to have it spared; but Jesus Christ did something more than ask; he pleaded, not with his mouth only, but with pierced hands, and pierced feet, and pierced side; and those prevailing pleas have moved the heart of God, and you are yet spared. May I speak to thee then? If thy life had been spared, when thou wast condemned to die, by my intervention — suppose such a case — would you despise me? If I had power at the Court, and when you were condemned to die, had gone in and pleaded for you, and you had been reprieved, year after year would you hate me? would you speak against me? would you rail at my character? would you find fault with my friends? I know you better: you would love me; you would be grateful for the sparing of your life. O sinner, I would you would treat the Lord Jesus as you would treat man. I would you would think of the Lord Jesus Christ as you would think of your fellow-man who had delivered you from death. You are not in hell, where you would have been if he had not come in and pleaded for you. I do beseech you, think of the misery of lost souls, and recollect that you would have been in such a woeful case yourself this morning, if he had not lifted up that hand once pierced for human sin. There, there, where the flames can no abatement know, where a drop of water is a boon too great to be received — there, where hope is excluded, and despair sits upon a throne of iron, binding captive souls in everlasting bands — where “For ever!” is written on the fire, and “For ever!” is printed on the chain, and “For ever! for ever! for ever!” rings out as the awful death-knell of everything like hope, and rest — there you would have been this morning, this morning, if sparing grace had not prevented. Where are your companions, your old companions? You sat in the pothouse with them; they are in hell, but you are not. When you were younger you sinned with them, and they are lost, but you are not. Why this difference made? Why are they cast away and you spared? I can only ascribe it to the gracious longsuffering of Jehovah. O, I pray you look at him who spared you, and weep and mourn for your sin. May the Spirit of God come down on you this morning and draw you to the foot of his dear cross, and as you see the blood which has spared your blood, and the death which has made you live until now, I do trust that the divine Spirit may make you fall down and say, “O Jesus, how can I offend thee? How can I stand out against thee? Accept me and save me for thy mercy’s sake.” For while I have thus spoken of the general interest. which Christ has in you all, I have good hope that Christ has a special interest in some of you; I hope that he has specially redeemed you from among men, and bought you not with silver and gold, but with his own precious blood, having loved

you with an everlasting love, I trust he intends with the bands of his kindness to draw you this morning. "Oh," says one, "I cannot think that such can be the case," But suppose you were to find out ere long that you were chosen of God, and dear to Christ, and were to be a jewel in his crown for ever, what would you say then of yourself? "I would mourn that I could ever have hated him that loved me so well. Oh! that I could ever have stood out against him that was determined to save me What a fool I was to quarrel with him who had paid my price, and chosen me by his grace, and taken me to himself and married unto himself for ever!" I tell you that God will forgive you, but you will never forgive yourselves for having stood out and resisted so long. Oh! may eternal mercy, which has not yet said, "Cut it down," now dig about you and dung you, that you may bring forth fruit, and then it shall be all to the praise of him whose precious blood has saved us from eternal wrath. May God bless these feeble words of mine. He knows how I meant them; how I meant to speak them, how I meant to have wept over you, how I wanted that my soul should heave with passionate desire for your conversion; but if there have been no such outward manifestations, yet I pray God that the truth itself may be irresistible, and may he get to himself the victory, and his shall be the praise, evermore.

# A SERMON FROM A RUSH.

NO. 651

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 24TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite’s hope shall perish.” — Job 8:11-13.

ISAAC walked in the fields at eventide to meditate. I commend him for his occupation. Meditation is exceedingly profitable to the mind. If we talked less, read less, and meditated more, we should be wiser men. I commend him for the season which he chose for that occupation — at eventide. When the business of the day was over, and the general stillness of nature was in harmony with the quiet of his soul. I also commend him for the place which he selected — the wide expanse of nature — the field. Wise men can readily find a thousand subjects for contemplation abroad in the open country. Our four-square room is not very suggestive; but when a man walks in the fields, having the Lord in his heart, and his whole mental faculties directed towards heavenly things, all things aid him in his pleasing occupation. If we look above to sun, moon, and stars, all these remind us of the grandeur of God, and make us ask ourselves, “What is man, that the Lord should be mindful of him, or the son of man, that Jehovah should visit him?” If we look below, the green meadows, or golden cornfields, all proclaim divine care and bounty. There is not a bird that sings, nor a grasshopper that chirps in the grass, which does not urge us to praise and magnify the name of the Most High: while the plants, from the hyssop on the wall to the cedar which spreads its boughs so gloriously on Lebanon, exhibit to observant eyes the wisdom of the great Creator of all things. The murmuring brook talks to the listening ear in hallowed whispers of him whose cloudy throne supplies its stream; and the air, as it sighs amid the

trees, tells in mysterious accents of the great unseen, but ever-active Spirit of the living God.

The great book of nature only needs to be turned over by a reverent hand, and to be read by an attentive eye, to be found to be only second in teaching to the Book of Revelation, He who would have us forget to study the fair creation of God, is foolish; he would have us neglect one book by a great author, in order that we may the better comprehend another from the same hand. The pages of inspiration reveal God far more clearly than the fields of creation; but having once obtained the light of God the Holy Spirit, we can then enter the world of nature, which has become consecrated to our best devotions, and find that “in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.”

Down by the river’s brink let us go, like Pharaoh’s daughter, and perhaps among the rushes we shall find a subject for thought, of which we may say, as she did of Moses, “I drew it out of the water.” The flag, as it waves in yonder marsh, has a word of warning, and whosoever hath ears to hear, let him hear.

I claim your attention for a preacher who is not often heard: lend him your ears, and when any shall ask you, “What went ye out for to see?” you need not blush to answer, “A reed shaken by the wind.” The rush shall, this morning, by God’s grace, teach us a lesson of self-examination. Bildad, the Shuhite, points it out to us as the picture of a hypocrite: so, going to our work at once, we shall have three things to talk about this morning. The hypocrite’s religion: first, what is it like? secondly, what it lives on; and thirdly, what will become of it?

### **I. First, then, THE HYPOCRITE’S PROFESSION: WHAT IS IT LIKE?**

It is here compared to a rush growing in the mire, and a flag flourishing in the water. This comparison has several points in it.

**1.** In the first place, hypocritical religion may be compared to the rush, for the rapidity with which it grows. True conversions are often very sudden — as, to wit, the conversion of Saul on his road to Damascus, and the conversion of the Philippian jailer, when suddenly startled out of his sleep and made to cry, “What must I do to be saved?” But the after-growth of Christians is not quite so rapid and uninterrupted: seasons of deep depression chill their joy; hours of furious temptation make a dreadful

onslaught upon their quiet; they cannot always rejoice; their life is chequered; they are emptied from vessel to vessel, and are acquainted with grief. True Christians are very like oaks, which take years to reach their maturity: many March winds blow through them before they are well rooted; and oftentimes tempest, and flood, and drought, and hurricane exercise their tremendous powers upon them. Not so the hypocrite: once having made a profession of being converted, things generally go very smoothly with him. "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." They are strangers to lamentations over inbred corruption. When believers talk of a warfare within, they are astonished. If we groan out, "O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" these gentlemen say, "What bad people these Christians must be, to talk in that way! What black hearts they must have! and how inconsistent for them to claim to be children of God!" The hypocrite can always pray well, and sing well; He meets no hindrances in coming to a mercy-seat, has no groans to mingle with his formal songs. The backs of living men ache under their loads, but a steam-engine having no living sensibilities knows no pains; a horse may stumble from weariness, but a locomotive never; even so the mechanical professor goes on and on and on at an even rate, when living souls enjoy no such perfect equanimity. Strong temptations do not grieve the mere professor; the devil does not care to molest him; he knows he is sure of him, and so he lets him very much alone. The Pharisee's house stood very firmly, though it was built on sand; and it neither shook, nor stirred, till the flood came; it was as firm to all human appearance as if it had been founded on the Rock of Ages. When the trial-hour came, then the destruction was terribly complete; but meanwhile, its foundations were digged without labor, and its timbers were set up without trouble. It is an ill sign, dear friend, if thou never hast to search thy heart with deep anxiety lest thou shouldst be deceived. To have such strong faith that you never waver is one thing; but to be filled with such strong presumption that you never examine yourself is quite another. "Tush!" says this man, "I can do all things; I can run and not be weary; I can walk and not faint; I do not understand these sighings of Little-faith, and limpings of Ready-to-halt; I cannot understand all this noise about conflict within — I am peaceable and quiet always." Yes, so it may be. Alas! many have heard the voice, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." So like the rush by the river, the hypocrite grows up suddenly and flourishingly in divine things, to all appearance, and finds it easy work to be green and fair in the ways of the Lord.

**2.** The rush is of all plants one of the most hollow and unsubstantial. It looks stout enough to be wielded as a staff, but he that leaneth upon it shall most certainly fall. It is a water-loving thing, and it partakes of the nature of that on which it feeds; it is unstable as water, and it does not excel; it has a fine appearance, but it is of no service whatever where stability is wanted. So is it with the hypocrite; he is fair enough on the outside, but there is no solid faith in Christ Jesus in him, no real repentance on account of sin, no vital union to Christ Jesus. He can pray, but not in secret, and the essence and soul of prayer he never knew. He has never wrestled with the angel, never sighed and cried unto God, and been “heard in that he feared.” He has a pretended confidence, but that confidence never was founded and bottomed on the finished work of Jesus Christ. He was never emptied of self, never brought down to feel that all his own doings, and willings, and powers, are less than nothing and vanity. If there had been a deep repentance, and a real confidence, and a true life in Jesus, then he had not been the hypocrite that he now is. Oh, dear friends, while I speak upon these things, I have over my spirit the overshadowing of a great gloom. What if some of us should be found to have been as unsubstantial as the rush by the river, when God comes to judge the world? What, when you need a hope to bear you up in the hour of death, what if it should snap beneath you? You high professors, you ancient members and revered church officers, you eloquent preachers of the Word, what if all your profession should, like the baseless fabric of a vision, pass away? You have been drinking of the cup of the Lord, you have been feasting at his sacramental table, you have talked a great deal of rich experiences, you have boasted of the graces which you think the Spirit of God has given you; but what if it should all be a delusion? What if you should have fostered in your soul self-deception, and should now be traversing the way of darkness, while you dream that you are in the way of light? May the Lord search us, and give us that true, solid, substantial, real, tamest-hearted faith in Christ which will stand the test.

The reed is hollow, and has no heart, and the hypocrite has none either; and want of heart is fatal indeed. When the Roman augur killed the victim to take an omen from the inwards, he always considered it to be the worst sign of all if no heart was found, or if the heart was shrivelled. “Their heart is divided,” said Hosea, “now shall they be found wanting.” God abhors the sacrifice where not the heart is found. Sirs, if you cannot give God your hearts, do not mock him with solemn sounds upon thoughtless tongues. If



you do not mean your godliness, do not profess it. Above all things, abhor mere profession. Jonathan Edwards tells us that in the great revival in America there were conversions of all sorts of people, from harlots upwards, but not one single conversion, he said, of ungodly professors. Those seemed to have been the only persons upon whom the Spirit of God did not descend. Beware, then, of having the outward form of religion, and being hollow and heartless like the rush, for then thy case is desperate indeed.

**3.** A third comparison very naturally suggests itself, namely, that the hypocrite is very like the rush for its bending properties. When the rough wind comes howling over the marsh, the rush has made up its mind that it will hold its place at all hazards. So if the wind blows from the north, he bends to the south, and the blast sweeps over him; and if the wind blows from the south, he bends to the north, and the gale has no effect upon him. Only grant the rush one thing, that he may keep his place, and he will cheerfully bow to all the rest. The hypocrite will yield to good influences if he be in good society. "Oh yes, certainly, certainly, sing, pray, anything you like." With equal readiness he will yield to evil influences if he happens to be in connection with them. "Oh, yes, sing a song, talk wantonness, run into gay society, attend the theater, take a turn with the dice; certainly, if you wish it; 'When we are at Rome we do as Rome does.'" Anything to oblige anybody is his motto. He is an omnivorous feeder, and like the swine can eat the vegetable of propriety, or the flesh of iniquity. One form of doctrine is preached to him, — very well, he would not wish to contend against it for a moment; it is contradicted by the next preacher he hears, — and really there is a great deal to be said on the other side; so he holds with hares and hounds too. He is all for heat when the weather is hot, and quite as much for cold when it is the season; he can freeze, and melt, and boil, all in an hour, just as he finds it pay best to be solid or liquid. If it be most respectable to call a thing black, well, then, it is black; if it will pay better to call it white, well then it is not so very black, in fact it is rather white, or white altogether if you like to call it so. The gross example of the Vicar of Bray comes at once to one's mind, who had been a papist under Henry VIII., then a protestant under a Protestant reign, then a papist under Mary, then again a Protestant under Elizabeth; and he declared he had always been consistent with his principle, for his principle was to continue the Vicar of Bray. Some there are, who are evidently consistent in this particular, and in the idea that they will make things as easy for themselves

as they can, and will get as much profit as they can, either by truth or error. Do you not know some such? They have not an atom of that stern stuff of which martyrs are made in the whole of their composition. They love that modern goddess, charity. When Diana went down Charity went up; and she is as detestable a goddess as ever Diana was. Give me a man who will be all things to all men to win souls, if it be not a matter of principle; but give me the man who, when it comes to be a matter of right and wrong, will rather die than deny his faith; who could burn, but could not for a moment conceal his sentiments, much less lay them aside until a more convenient season. True godliness, such as will save the soul, must not be the mere bark, but the heart, the sap, the essence of a man's being — it must run right through and through, so that he cannot live without it. That religion is not worth picking up from a dunghill which you do not carry every day about with you, and which is not the dearest object for which you live. Beloved, we must be ready to die for Christ, or we shall have no joy in the fact that Christ died for us.

**4.** Yet again, the bulrush has been used in Scripture as a picture of a hypocrite, from its habit of hanging down its head. “Is it to hang thy head like a bulrush?” asks the prophet, speaking to some who kept a hypocritical fast. Pretended Christians seem to think that to hang down the head is the very index of a deep piety. To look piously miserable — to speak in a wretched tone of voice — to be constantly lamenting the wickedness of the times, and bewailing the badness of the harvests and the wickedness of our legislature — to see nothing anywhere but what is vile, deceptive, and abominable, is thought to be the trade mark of superfine godliness. It is the mark of a hypocrite to wear always a sad countenance: Job says of the hypocrite, “Will he delight himself in the Almighty?” and the answer that he expected was, “No, it is altogether impossible!” A real hypocrite finds no satisfaction in his religion; he goes through with it because he thinks he must; he walks to his place of worship with his books under his arm just as a culprit might be supposed to walk up the gallows stairs, and when he gets to a place of worship, he is very proper in all his demeanour — very proper indeed, but he is never joyous. Smile on Sundays! Shocking! What! enjoy anything like mirth at any time! Awful! Now, you understand all about this. There are some things which you must handle very tenderly, because they will break if you don't. A man, dressed in shoddy garments, walks very demurely for fear the rubbish should rend, but good broadcloth allows us liberty of action without fear of such an accident. Gingerbread religionists

may only be looked at in their sombre aspects, but genuine believers are not ashamed to be viewed even when their cheerfulness is at its full. A person who has bought a pair of shoes made of brown paper must mincingly tread with delicate steps; but he, who according to Scripture, is shod with iron and brass may, with manly gait, march on, and even leap for joy without fear. I love Christian preciseness of action, but I abhor hypocritical decorum and formalistic exactness of worship. I would advocate holy cheerfulness, a Christian freedom which lets the whole man show itself, a freedom of sorrowing when it is the time for sorrow, and a freedom of rejoicing when it is the time for rejoicing. That constrained, stiff starched religion which some people think such a great deal of, is nothing but the bulrush religion of the hypocrite and the Pharisee, and the sooner we away with it the better. The man whose heart is right with God does not stop always to be saying, "How will this look?" His heart tells him, as he reads the Word, that such a course is right, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he follows it. Right with him is delight. He knows that evil is not denied to him as though he were debarred from pleasure, but that it is only kept from him as a tender parent would keep poison from a child. Our life is the life of liberty; and we find of true religion, that "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

**5.** Once more: the rush is well taken as an emblem of the mere professor from its bearing no fruit. Nobody would expect to find figs on a bulrush, or grapes of Eshcol on a reed. So it is with the hypocrite: he brings forth no fruit. The hypocrite gets as far as this: "I do not drink, I do not swear, I do not cheat, I do not lie, I do not break the Sabbath." His religion is all negative; but when it comes to anything positive he fails. What have you ever done for Christ? You may look at the whole of the hypocrite's life, and it yields nothing. Perhaps he has given a guinea or two to a charity. Yes: but did he give it to God? He has been kind to the poor. Did he look at the poor as being God's poor, and care for them because God cares for them? Did he do it for God? Throughout the whole life of the hypocrite there is nothing in which he really serves God. What! not when he has made that long prayer? He did it either to satisfy his conscience or to please those who were listening to him. Did he really pray to God and do it for God's glory, and in order that he might have fellowship with God? If so, he is no hypocrite; but the hypocrite proper, though he has left off many wrong things, yet he has not advanced so far as to bring forth fruit meet for repentance; he has not run in the way of holiness; he has not

sought after the image of Christ; he does not delight in communion with Christ; he has no faith, no joy, no hope, no conformity to the spirit of the Master; he lacks fruit, and therefore he is as the rush, and not as a plant of the Lord's right hand planting.

I will not stay further to work out this parallel; only if any words have seemed to strike you, let them strike you. If there has been a sentence in what I have said that suited my own case, I do desire to feel its power. The worst is, that some of you who are most sincere will be troubled when you search yourselves, when we do not want you to be; and others who are really hypocrites are the very last persons to think they are so. When our young members come to me in such trouble, crying, "Sir, I am afraid I am a hypocrite," I always think, "I believe you are not, or else you would not be afraid of it." But those who are never afraid, who have just written it down as a matter of fact that all is well with them, should listen to the word of the prophet, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not." The worm may be in the center of the apple, when the cheek of the fruit is still beautiful to look upon. God save us from hypocrisy, and grant us grace to see ourselves in a true light.

**II.** Secondly, we have to consider WHAT IT IS THAT THE HYPOCRITE'S RELIGION LIVES ON. "Can the rush grow up without mire? Can the flag grow without water?" The rush is entirely dependent upon the ooze in which it is planted. If there should come a season of drought, and the water should fail from the marsh, the rush would more speedily die than any other plant. "Whilst it is yet in its greenness and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb." The Hebrew name for the rush signifies a plant that is always drinking; and so the rush lives perpetually by sucking and drinking in moisture. This is the case of the hypocrite. The hypocrite cannot live without something that shall foster his apparent piety. Let me show you some of this mire and water upon which the hypocrite lives.

Some people's religion cannot live without excitement: revival services, earnest preachers, and zealous prayer-meetings keep them green; but the earnest minister dies, or goes to another part of the country; the Church is not quite so earnest as it was, and what then? Where are your converts? Oh! how many there are who are hot-house plants: while the temperature is kept up to a certain point they flourish, and bring forth flowers, if not fruits; but take them out into the open air, give them one or two nights'

frost of persecution, and where are they? My dear hearers, beware of that godliness which depends upon excitement for its life. I do not speak against religious excitement: men get excited over politics, and science, and trade — why should they not be excited about the far weightier things of religion? But still, though you may indulge yourself with it sometimes, do not let it be your element. I am afraid that many Churches have been revived and revived, till they became like big bubbles full of wind, and now they have almost vanished into thin air. The grace which man gives, man can take away. If your piety has sprung up like a mushroom, it will be about as frail. Doubtless many are converted at revivals who run well and hold out; and then their conversion is the work of the Spirit of God; but there are as many, I fear, of another kind, who get delirious with excitement; who fancy that they have repented, dream that they have believed, and then imagine themselves to be the children of God, and go on in such a delusion perhaps year after year. Beware! beware! Some hypocrites can no more live without excitement, than the rush can live without water; but, dear hearers, pray that you may be like the palm tree, which even in the desert, still continues green, and brings forth its fruit in the year of drought.

Many mere professors live upon encouragement. You are the child of godly parents: those parents naturally look with great delight upon the first signs of grace in you, and they encourage and foster, as they should do, everything that is good. Or you belong to a class such as some of those most blessed classes which meet here, presided over by tender, loving spirits, and whenever you have a little difficulty you can run to these kind helpers; whenever any fresh temptation arises you find strength in their warnings and counsels. This is a very great privilege. I wish that in all Churches they would practice the text, “Encourage him” more and more. We ought to comfort the feeble-minded and support the weak. But, dear friends, beware of the piety which depends upon encouragement. You will have to go, perhaps, where you will be frowned at and scowled at, where the head of the household, instead of encouraging prayer, will refuse you either the room or the time for engaging in it. You may meet with hard words, bitter sneers, and cruel mockings, because you profess to be a Christian. Oh! get grace which will stand that fiery trial. God give you a grace that will be independent of human helpers, because it hangs upon the bare arm of God himself.

Some, too, we know, whose religion is sustained by example. It may be the custom in the circle in which you move to attend a place of worship; nay, more, it has come to be the fashion to join the Church and make a profession of religion. Well, example is a good thing. When I was crossing the Humber from Hull to New Holland the other day, a steamer came in with sheep on board, and there was some difficulty in getting them from the boat to the pier; but the butcher first dragged one sheep over the drawbridge, and then the others came along readily enough. Example is a good thing; one true sheep of Christ may lead the rest in the way of truth and obedience; but a religion which depends entirely on other people, must obviously go to ruin when subjected to the temptation of an evil example. Why if you simply join the Church because other young people do it, or profess such-and-such a faith because it happens to be the prevailing doctrine in the district where you reside, why, then, your religion will depend on the locality, and when you move somewhere else, your religion will move off too, or you from it. Young man, avoid this feeble sort of piety. Be a man who can be singular when to be singular is to be right. If the whole world shall run headlong down the broad road, be it yours to thread your way through the crowd against the current along the uphill way of life. The dead fish floats down the stream, the live fish goes against it. Show your life by shunning unholy example.

Furthermore, a hypocrite's religion is often very much supported by the profit that he makes by it. Mr. By-ends joined the Church, because, he said, he should get a good wife by making a profession of religion. Besides, Mr. By-ends kept a shop, and went to a place of worship, because he said, the people would have to buy goods somewhere, and if they saw him at their place very likely they would come to his shop, and so his religion would help his trade. Thus he argued that there were three good things — a profession of religion, a good wife, and a good trade as well. Suppose, Mr. By-ends, that your religion involved your missing the supposed good wife, and losing the good customers, what about it then? "Why, then," says he, "I'm very sorry, but really we must look to the main chance; we must not commit ourselves too far." That is Mr. By-ends' way of judging. He does not look upon the things of God as the main chance; they are means to an end — that is all. I fear me there is much of this everywhere; you will know best, any of you, how far you are affected by it. I am sure there are few, if any of you, who can be suspected of coming here to gain trade, for the thing does not answer in such a city as London; but in country towns this

operates marvellously. You can have the dissenting trade if you go to meeting, or you can have the Church trade if you go to the steeple-house. Well, worshippers of the golden calf, do you know what Christ will do with you, if you are found in his temple, when he comes? That scourge of small cords will be on your backs. "Take these things hence," he will say, as he sees your tables, and your doves, and your shekels; "my Father's house shall be called a house of prayer, ye have made it a den of thieves." The rush will grow where there is plenty of mire, plenty of profit for religion, but dry up the gains, and where would some people's religion be? Pray with all your might against this loathsome disgusting sin of making a pretension to godliness, merely for the sake of getting something by it. Yet, doubtless, there are crowds who do this.

With certain persons their godliness rests very much upon their prosperity. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" was the wicked question of Satan concerning that upright man; but of many it might be asked with justice, for they love God after a fashion because He prospers them; but if things went ill with them they would give up all faith in God. I remember two who joined this church, I remember them with sorrow; I faintly hope good things of them, but I frequently fear the worst. They joined this church when things were going very well; but almost from that very time they had a succession of losses, and they imputed this to their having made a profession of religion, and so gave up outward religious duties. Whether they did that out of a scrupulous honesty, I scarce can tell, or whether it really was this, that they could not receive evil at the hand of God as well as good, I do not know; I am inclined to fear it was the latter. There are some who quarrel with the most High. If they can clearly see that, since the time of their supposed conversion, the world has gone prosperously with them, then they will love God in their poor carnal way; but if it has been nothing but adversity, then they are astonished, and think God is not kind with them. Do you know that the promise of the old covenant was prosperity, but the promise of the new covenant is adversity? Listen to this text: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit" — what! "He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." If you bring forth fruit you will have to endure affliction. "Alas!" says one, "that is a terrible prospect." Ah! but, beloved, this affliction works out such comfortable fruit, that the Christian, who is the subject of it, has learned to rejoice in tribulations, because as his tribulations abound so his consolation aboundeth by Christ Jesus. Rest

assured, if you are a godly man, you will be no stranger to the rod. Trials must and will befall. Do not let me mislead anybody into the idea of praying for trouble. I have heard of one who did so; he never did it but once; many trials made him wiser. The true-born child knows how to bear the rod, but he will not ask for it; if he asked for it he would be very silly, and it would be of no service to him. You will have it sooner or later, and though, it may be, months and years will roll very quietly with you, yet there will be days of darkness, and you ought to rejoice that there are such, for in these you will be weaned from earth and made meet for heaven; you will be delivered from your clings to the present, and made to long, and pine, and sigh for the things which are not seen but eternal, so soon to be revealed to you.

To conclude this point. The hypocrite is very much affected by the respectability of the religion which he avows. John Bunyan's pithy way of putting it is, "Many walk with religion when she wears her silver slippers;" but they forsake her if she goes barefoot. May I ask you this question? What would you do if to follow Christ were penal according to the laws of the land? If you had to live under perpetual jeopardy of life for reading the Word, would you hide it as the saints of God did, behind the wainscoat or under the floor, and read it down in the cellar or up in the garret at spare moments? Could you come forward in the day of trial as those did in Pliny's time, and say, "I am a Christian"? Do you think that like poor Tomkins, when Bonner held his finger over the candle to let him see what it was like, you could still say you could burn, but you could not turn? Could you stand as some of the martyrs did at the stake, telling those who looked on that if they did not clap their hands at last they might know their religion was not true, and so at the very last, when their poor fingers were all on fire, they would still lift them up, and wave their hands to and fro, and cry out, "None but Christ! none but Christ!" Do you think you would have the grace to suffer for Christ Jesus? You may say, "I fear I should not." My dear friends, that fear is a very natural one; but mark you, if you can bear the ordinary trials of the day, the constant trials of the world, and take them before God and exhibit Christian patience under them, you may hope that as a believer in Christ you would have more grace given you when the trials became more severe, and so you would be able to pass through them as the saints did of old. But mark you, if the present trials and troubles of the day are too much for you, and you cannot exhibit Christian patience under them, I am compelled to ask you in the language



of Jeremiah, "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" This may help us to try ourselves.

### III. We have a third point to close with, and that is, WHAT BECOMES OF THE HYPOCRYTE'S HOPE?

"While it is yet in its greenness and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." Long before the Lord comes to cut the hypocrite down, it often happens that he dries up for want of the mire on which he lives. The excitement, the encouragement, the example, the profit, the respectability, the prosperity, upon which he lived fail him, and he fails too. Alas, how dolefully is this the case in all Christian Churches! Little have we had to mourn over defections during the years of our ministry; but we have had some sorrowful, very sorrowful cases, and I doubt not we shall have more. "Lord, is it I?" "Lord, is it I?" is a question that may be passed round among professing Christians now. I fear that there are those here this morning who one day will deny the Lord that bought them, and crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame. "Oh!" says one, "it cannot be me." Do not be too sure, friend, do not be too sure! If I could come in prophetic spirit to some of you who will do this, and look you in the face, and tell you what you will do, you would say like Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" And I should have to settle my countenance until I became ashamed, and look at you yet again, and say, "You are no dog, and yet you will play the dog, and return to your vomit, and become yet again what once you were, only with this aggravation, that you will have sinned against light and against knowledge, against sacred influences and professed enjoyments of divine love." You have cleansed the house, you have swept it, you have garnished it, and the evil spirit is gone; but if the Holy Spirit has not driven him out, if this has not been a work of power on the part of God, that evil spirit will come back, and he will take unto himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they shall enter in and dwell there, and your last end will be worse than the first. Better not to have known the way of righteousness than, having known it, to be turned back again. The worst of men are those traitors who leave the army of truth to side with the foe. I believe in the doctrine of the final perseverance of every true child of God; but there are in all our churches certain spurious pretenders who will not hold on their way, who

will blaze and sparkle for a season, and then they will go out in darkness. They are “wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.” Better far make no pretension of having come to Christ, and of having been born again, unless through divine grace thou shalt hold fast to the end. Remember the back door to hell! Remember the back door to hell! There is a public entrance for the open sinner; but there is a back door for the professed saint; there is a back door for the hoary-headed professor, who has lived many years in apparent sincerity, but who has been a liar before God. There is a back door for the preacher who can talk fast and loudly, but who does not in his own heart know the truth he is preaching: there is a back door to hell for Church members, who are amiable and excellent in many respects, but who have not really looked unto the Lord Jesus Christ and found true salvation in him. God grant that this may wake some, who otherwise would sleep themselves into perdition.

Yet again, where the rush still continues green because it has mire and water enough on which to feed, another result happens, namely, that ere long the sickle is used to cut it down. So must it be with thee professor, if thou shalt keep up a green profession all thy days, yet if thou be heartless, spongy, soft, yielding, unfruitful, like the rush thou wilt be cut down, and sorrowful will be the day when, with a blaze, thou shalt be consumed. Oh! to be cut down at the last. Death, I hope, beloved, will be to many of you the season of your greatest joy; you will climb to Pisgah’s top with weary footsteps, but when once there, the vision of the landscape will make amends for all the toil. The brooks, and hills, and vales, with milk and honey flow; and your delighted eyes shall gaze upon your portion, your eternal heritage. But oh! how different will be our lot, if instead of this, “Tekel” shall be written upon us at the last, because we are found wanting. “O my God! my God! hast thou forsaken me? Am I, after all, mistaken? Have I played the hypocrite, and must I take the mask off now? Have I covered over the cancer? Have I worn a golden cloth over my leprous forehead, and must it be rent away? and must I stand, the mock of devils and the laughter of all worlds? What! have I drunk of thy cup, have I eaten with thee in the streets, and must I hear thee say, ‘I never knew thee, depart from me thou worker of iniquity’? Oh! must it be?” Then how hard will be the bed on which I die! How stuffed with thorns that pillow! How tortured and anguished my poor broken heart, when every prop is knocked away, and the house comes tumbling down about my ears, when every drop of comfort is dried up, and even here the thirsty spirit lacks a drop of

cordial to afford it comfort! O my dear hearers, by the eternal God I do conjure you, seek a genuine religion. Do not put off self-examination. I dare not put it off on my own account, and I do pray you do not postpone it on yours. If I have not said a word to comfort and to cheer this morning, forgive that lack of service, for my aim is to drive at this one thing — it will in the end be the best and most comforting to you all, if you will set to work now, and with diligence try yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. Cry to God to aid you in this; you cannot do it well yourself, for “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?” O Cry to him — “Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my ways.” Time is flying: set about the business ere it is gone. Death is coming on: search yourselves ere the darkness thickens into midnight gloom. The judgment-day will soon arrive; the king will sit upon the great white throne. Oh! before he judges you, judge yourselves, that ye be not judged. The division will soon take place between the goats, and the sheep. O, seek to be under Christ the heavenly Shepherd now, that ye be not banished from his presence at the last. What more can I say? It is not your body that is at stake — it is not your estates that are in jeopardy — your souls, your undying souls, destined to heaven’s glories or to hell’s miseries are now in question. Search yourselves, search yourselves, and God Almighty search you too.

Ah! there are some of you who have no need to search. Without any trial you know yourselves to be on the wrong side; and there are others of you who, when you have searched, will be still afraid that you are wrong. Ah! well, whatsoever we are, or may have been, remember Jesus came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Looking to that thorn-crowned head, those dear hands and feet nailed to the tree, that blessed heart all set abroad by the soldier’s spear — looking there, looking there only, looking there now, we find salvation. Believers, you have looked before; but if that be a matter of question, look now. “Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.” Repeat that glance which gave you comfort. There is life still in a look at that Crucified One; there is life at this moment for thee. Jesu! thy people look to thee again! Thou Lover of our souls! accept us! Oh, you who never looked before, he reigns in glory, mighty to save. Repentance and remission of sins he gives. Only do but trust him with your souls. Have done with all your works, your willings, your prayings, your tears, your

everything as a ground of confidence, and trust in him who died for sinners, and you “shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of his hands.” The Lord grant we may be found right at last; for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Psalm 139.***

# JESUS-THE SHEPHERD.

NO. 652

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 1ST, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.”-Isaiah 40:11.*

OUR Lord Jesus is very frequently described as the shepherd of his people. The figure is inexhaustible, but it has been so often handled that I suppose it would be difficult to say anything fresh upon it. We all know, and are very glad and comforted in the knowledge, that the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Shepherd, exercises towards us all the kind and necessary offices which a shepherd performs towards his sheep. With gentle sway he rules us for our good: “Let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.” He guides us: “And when he putteth forth his own sheep he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.” He provides for us: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.” He protects us from all forms of evil; therefore, “though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, for he is with us: his rod and his staff, they comfort us.” If we wander, he seeks us out and brings us back. “He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” If we be broken, he binds us up; if we be wounded, he heals according to his own word, “I will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.” The sheep is an animal of many diseases and many wants, and so the Christian is an individual of many sins and many infirmities; but as the shepherd endeavors to meet all the wants of his flock, so our Lord Jesus succours all the blood-bought company in all their needs.

We propose to illustrate the great doctrine of the text in a scriptural, and therefore we hope in an interesting, manner. First, we shall consider in connection with the text, Old Testament illustrations; in the second place, New Testament descriptions; and, in the third place, Impressive applications.

**I.** We commence with OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATIONS of the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ discharges the office of feeding his flock like a shepherd.

Out of five great types we begin with Abel, the shepherd slain. The second man who was born into the world was a shepherd, and was in many respects typical of our good shepherd. "Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." Abel was a type of the Savior in that, being a shepherd, he sanctified his work to the glory of God, and he offered sacrifice of blood upon the altar of the Lord, and the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering. This early type of our Lord is not very full and comprehensive, but it is exceedingly clear and distinct. Like the first streak of light which tinges the east at the sunrise, it does not reveal everything, but it clearly manifests the great fact that the sun is coming. Abel is nothing like so complete and perfect a portrait of our own Lord Jesus, as other shepherds of whom we have to speak; but as we see him standing a shepherd and yet a sacrificing priest offering upon the altar a sacrifice of sweet smell unto God, we discern there at once the picture of our Lord, who brings before his Father a sacrifice of precious blood, to which Jehovah ever hath respect. Abel, the sacrificing shepherd, was hated by his brother-hated without a cause; and even so was the Savior: the spirit of this world, the natural and carnal man, hated the better man, the accepted man in whom the Spirit of grace was found, and rested not until his blood had been shed. Abel fell, and sprinkled his own altar and his sacrifice with his own blood; and he must be blind indeed who cannot behold the Lord Jesus slain by the enmity of man while serving as a priest before the Lord. Abel is the type of Jesus the slain shepherd; let us attentively consider him. We have been reading in the tenth chapter of John, this morning, that the good Shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep-let us weep over him as we view him stretched upon the ground by the hatred of mankind at the foot of his own altar of sacrifice, pouring out his blood. We read of Abel's blood, in the New Testament, that it speaketh. "He being dead yet speaketh." "The Lord said unto Cain, The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." Herein we

have a blessed type of the Lord: his blood had a mighty tongue, and the import of its prevailing cry is not vengeance but mercy.

*“The rich blood of Jesus slain  
Speaks peace as loud from every vein.”*

It is precious beyond all preciousness to stand at Jesus Christ’s altar, and to see him himself offered there as a whole burnt-offering acceptable unto God; to see him lying bleeding there as the slaughtered priest, and then to hear the voice of his blood speaking peace in our consciences, peace in the Church of God, peace between Jew and Gentile, peace between man and his offended Maker-speaking peace all down the ages of eternity for blood-washed man. Abel is first in order of time, and Jesus first in order of excellence. The earth opened her mouth to receive Abel’s blood, and Jesus’ sacrifice has blessed this poor, sin-ruined world. Abel received divine witness to his righteousness, and Jesus obtained the same in the day of his resurrection; but fullness of other matter forbids us to linger.

Further down the page of sacred history we find another shepherd. He is a more instructive type of the Savior, perhaps, than the first, but in Abel we discover a truth which is absent in all others. Abel is the only one of the typical shepherds who dies at the foot of the altar, he is the only sacrificing shepherd; and herein you see Jesus Christ in the very earliest ages set forth to mankind as the slaughtered victim; that whatever else the early saints might not see, yet they might know that the seed of the woman would shed his precious blood. This most vital truth is not withheld even for a little season.

Now we turn to Jacob, the toiling shepherd. Here is a type of the good Shepherd not as dying, but as keeping sheep with a view to get unto himself a spouse and a flock. Jacob left his father’s house. He departed from all the joy and comfort of the house in which he was the recognized heir, both by his own purchase and his Father’s promise. Our Lord Jesus Christ, out of the love which he bore us, left his Father’s house above, and came down to tabernacle among men. Jacob repaired to his mother’s brethren; and even so our Lord, on the mother’s side, counts men his brethren. “He came unto his own.” That vision which Jacob saw the first night after he had left his father’s house, seems to me to be a representation of the great object which our Lord had set before him as the intent of his mission here below. Jacob slept, and dreamed that he saw a ladder the foot whereof stood upon the earth, while the top reached to the

heaven of heavens, whence a Covenant God spoke to his chosen servant; and so, before the Savior's eye, as the great reward of all his life's travail, he saw a ladder set up by which earth should be connected with heaven. He saw fallen man at the foot of it, but he beheld a Covenant God at the top, while the angels of God ascending and descending upon his own person, as upon the divine road of communication by which prayer mounts, and mercy descends. As soon as Jacob arrived at the house of his mother's brethren, he began to work out of the love, he bore to Rachel; and Jesus Christ no sooner descended upon this lower earth, than he began at once to labor to win his spouse. Now there were in the house of manhood two daughters to both of whom Jesus must be affianced. There was first of all the Jewish Church, which was in his eyes his Rachel, his dearly beloved, and he toiled for her; but in the days of his flesh his own received him not. Though while he was here below, he declared that he was not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet Israel was not gathered; yet Jesus lost not his reward, for the Gentile Church, the tender-eyed Leah, was his reward. "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

Leah, the Gentile Church, is far more fruitful unto Christ in spiritual children than the Rachel for whom he served in the days of his flesh; but the day cometh when Rachel shall be more fully increased, when the fullness of the Gentiles having been gathered in, the Jew shall recognize Messiah, and the Jewish people shall own their King. We understand from Jacob's own description of his toil, that his labor in order to get to himself his spouse was of the most arduous character; and it will be well for the intelligent Christian to see Jesus Christ in just such toil, seeking to redeem unto himself his own beloved, that they might for ever be one with himself in his own glory. In the thirty-first chapter of Genesis, at the thirty-eighth verse, Jacob, while expostulating with Laban, thus describes his own toil: "This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee: I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house: I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy



cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times.” Even more toil some than this was the life of our Savior here below. He watched over all his sheep till he could give in as his last account, “Of all those whom thou hast given me I have lost none, but the son of perdition, That the Scriptures might be fulfilled.” His hair was wet with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. Sleep departed from his eyes, for all night he was in prayer wrestling with God. One night it is Peter who must be pleaded for; another time, another claims his tearful intercession. No shepherd sitting beneath the cold skies, looking up to the stars, could ever utter such complaints because of the hardness of his toil as Jesus Christ might have brought, if he had chosen to do so, because of the sternness of his service in order to gather unto himself his people.

*“Cold mountains and the midnight air,  
Witnessed the fervor of his prayer;  
The desert his temptation knew,  
His conflict and his victory too.”*

It is sweet to dwell upon the spiritual parallel of Laban having required all the sheep at Jacob’s hand. If they were torn of beasts he must make it good; if any of them died, he must stand as surety for the whole. And did not the Savior stand just so while he was here below? Was not his toil for his Church just the toil of one who felt that he was under suretyship obligations to bring every one of them safe to the hand of him who had committed them to his charge? Look upon toiling Jacob and you see a representation of him of whom the text says, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.” One other point of resemblance there is here, namely, that when Jacob had thus purchased to himself his spouse, and had received a reward for all his toil out of the flock which he himself tended, he then conducted both his family and his flock away from Laban. This is a point never to be forgotten. Shouldering his cross, Jesus went without the camp, and in so doing he speaks to each of us. “Let us therefore go forth without the camp, bearing his reproach.” He went to his mother’s brethren that he might fetch out his chosen from among men, and his voice to his spouse is, “Hearken, O daughter, and consider: forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.” Jacob coming back from Laban to the Promised Land, is a true picture of Jesus Christ coming up from the world, followed by his Church, to enter upon that better Canaan which has been given to us by a covenant of salt for ever. The toiling shepherd has never ceased his work

till he has bidden farewell to Laban once for all, and has come to dwell in tents where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt before him; and Christ's work is not accomplished in us till he has made us like himself, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Although these types are very full, I choose rather to give them to you as suggestions to think out for yourselves, than to enlarge upon them my self.

Joseph is a type of Jesus, reigning in the Egypt of this world for the good of his own people, while they are here below. Remember Joseph's history. We find that he kept his father's flock with his brethren. So did our Savior when he began to teach and to preach. In the midst of the envious Scribes and Pharisees he kept his father's flock. They could not, however, brook him in whom they discerned a royalty not in themselves. As Joseph wore a coat of many colors, indicative of princely rank and of his father's love, even so Jesus Christ in the perfections of his nature, being something more than ordinary man, was soon spied out by envious shepherds as anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Then began they to find fault with his words. He had seen a dream, in which the sun, and moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance unto him. And as the envious Scribes and Pharisees listened to the word of the Savior, and heard him claim that he was the Son of God, and that he came down from heaven, they thought that he dreamed; they charged him with blasphemy, and straightway their hearts were set against him, and they were determined upon his destruction. They sold him for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. So our Joseph was sold into Egypt to the powers of evil. There he was falsely accused, though in him was no sin. Our Joseph, our blessed Shepherd, was cast into the prison of the grave, and there he abode for awhile, but by-and-by he came out of prison, and Joseph-Jesus-it matters not which word I use, Joseph was made ruler over all the land of Egypt. That same Shepherd of ours who was sold by his envious brethren, and who went down into the prison-tomb, is now exalted high above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named; and even here, in this Egypt, where his people now dwell, Jesus Christ is king. Not a dog dare move his tongue in all the land of Egypt without the permission of Joseph, and surely no enemy can forge a weapon against Christ's Church here on earth.

*“He overrules all mortal things,  
And manages our mean affairs.”*

The Father hath committed all power unto his Son. Jesus Christ is King over Egypt's realm. Now observe the likeness between Joseph and Jesus in this respect. Joseph was of very singular advantage to the Egyptians. They must have starved in the years of famine, if his prescient eye had not foreseen the famine, and stored up the plenty of the seven previous years. And Jesus Christ is of great service even to this wicked world. It is by him that it is preserved. The barren figtree was spared because the husbandman pleaded for it, and the intercession of Jesus Christ spares the lives of the unregenerate; and though they will be swept away with the besom of destruction when their iniquity is fully ripe, yet meanwhile they are spared because of the mediatorial sovereignty of the great Shepherd. Jesus Christ, like Joseph, rules over the land of Egypt; but Joseph ruled for a special purpose. God had sent Joseph to Egypt, but not mainly for the sake of the Egyptians. "God hath sent me hither to save your souls alive; "this was Joseph's own testimony. Jesus Christ now hath power over all flesh-why? "That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." The universal reign of Christ, in which respect his redemption comes to all the sons of men, has for its object that special redemption, in which respect it comes only to his own people, who are his sheep. Perhaps some of you may wonder how I venture to call Joseph a shepherd. You grant me that in his early days he kept his father's flock, but was he a shepherd while he was in Egypt? You will believe the dying words of his father Jacob, will you not? His father Jacob, when speaking of him said, "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall; the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob;"-then there comes a sentence between brackets-"from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel." Joseph is here called the shepherd and the stone. I could not make out in meditation why he should be both a shepherd and a stone, but you remember that Jesus Christ was at once the shepherd and the stone which the builders refused, which afterwards became the headstone of the corner; and so Joseph in being a shepherd of his people, and in having been the corner stone of the Israelitish race while they were in Egypt, was both the shepherd and the stone of Israel. Beloved, it seems to me to be such a delightful thought to think that Jesus Christ is King to-day in the world. The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice. Jesus Christ wears the crown this day of universal monarchy. "The Lord said unto my lord, sit thou on my right hand until thine enemies are made thy footstool;" so that nothing happens now, but

that which Jesus permits, ordains, and overrules. Let empires go to wreck, it is Christ who breaks them with a rod of iron, and shivers them like potters' vessels: let conflagrations burn down cities, and let diseases devastate nations, let war succeed to war, and pestilence to famine, yet still our Joseph rules all things well, and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, that are called according to his purpose. The saints are in the world, but Christ reigns over the world for his Church, that it may be kept and preserved in the midst of an evil generation. You remember that remarkable saying, "Now every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians"-a strange thing, and yet in Egypt the shepherds found their shelter. Now every Christian is an abomination to the world, and yet it is in this world that at the present time we dwell in so much temporal comfort, under such excellent government, with so little disturbance. To what can we attribute it but to this, that Jesus sits upon the throne and rules Egypt for the good of Israel, and the world is made subservient to the blessedness of the Church of God. I must not tarry any longer, though it is a very tempting theme, but I want to take you on to the next shepherd.

Jesus Christ will be represented to you in quite a different character under the next illustration. Moses was not a ruler in Egypt, but quite a distinct character. Moses, when he kept sheep, kept them in the wilderness, far away from all other flocks; and when he became a shepherd over God's people Israel, his business was not to preserve them in Egypt, but to conduct them out of it. Here, then, is a representation of Jesus Christ as the Shepherd of a separated people, called from among men, and made to be a distinguished nation, not numbered among the people. Jesus, like Moses, might have been a king. The devil said to him, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." The people would have taken him, we read, and made him a king, for he was naturally of royal race, but he refused. As Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, so Jesus Christ said, "Get thee behind me, Satan," to all the pomp and glory of this present world, and preferred to take part with his poor, despised people, who were crushed down by the reigning powers in the Egypt of his days. Now, Moses began his mission, you remember, by going to Pharaoh and saying, "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me." Jesus Christ begins as the Shepherd of the separate ones by demanding that they should be let go from the bondage of their natural estate. With a high hand and with an outstretched arm, he fetches out his people from among men: plagues and marvels does he work, but he brings

them all out. "Not a hoof shall be left behind;" not one child of God, not one sheep of his pasture left in the Egypt of sin and death. They shall all be made to go without the camp-leaving even Goshen to go into a wilderness because they must be alone with God, and they cannot worship him in a land full of idols. I might dwell for a long time on all the transactions of Moses in Egypt, and especially upon the paschal supper, all of which was doubtless typical of him of whom the text says, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." Our main point is the great exodus of Moses, who at the head of all the tribes goes forth to Succoth. There they pitch their tents. By-and-by they advance to Pi-hahiroth with the Red Sea before them. With Moses' staff to lead the van they pass through the sea dry-shod, and come absolutely into the wilderness of separation, as, beloved, every heir of heaven is brought right out of Egypt, led through the Red Sea of Jesus Christ's blood, baptized into Jesus, and brought out into the separated position in the wilderness. Now, it is easy to see how Moses was a shepherd to the people while in the wilderness. He led them in all their wanderings. He was King in Jeshurun over the people whom God had given to him. When they wanted food his prayer brought down the manna or the quails; when they needed drink it was his voice that made the rock burst forth with floods, or his rod that smote, and lo, the flinty rock gushed with torrents. If there were Amalekites to fight, the uplifted arm of Moses did more than the sharp sword of Joshua. They sometimes received chastisement from him. He ground the golden calf to pieces, and strewed the powder on water and made them drink. They were equally dependent upon him for comfort too; his speech distilled as the dew and dropped as the rain, the small rain upon the tender herb. Moses, like a shepherd, had to carry all the people in his bosom as God's appointed messenger, and often did he find it a very weary load, so that he said, "I cannot bear the burden of this great people alone." You have here a suggestive type of Jesus Christ, the leader of the separated Church. Brethren, I think we may all of us not only catch the idea but live it out, the Church is in the desert now. We have left the world, we have left its maxims, its customs, its religion. We hate the world's religion as much as we do its irreligion. We have forsaken it for good, never to go back again; and though the flesh sometimes falls a lusting and would fain go back to the old bondage, yet, under the guidance of our greater Shepherd, who leads his people far away from Mizraim's polluted shore, we march onward by devious ways to the promised rest.

The last type I mean to give you is David. This shepherd represents Jesus Christ, not at all as the others, but as King in the midst of his Church. David, like Jesus Christ, begins his life with trials. He is anointed and straightway he begins to suffer. The world's king recognizes him, fixes his eye upon him, hurls the javelin at him, hunts him like a partridge on the mountains, and rests not till he himself is slain. Poor David is the apt picture of Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh, hunted by the world's king who would fain put him down and crush out his spark. David at length mounts to his throne, quietly and in peace he sits in Jerusalem as king over Israel and Judah; and even at this day, though the kings of the earth set themselves against him, and their rulers take counsel together, yet this is the decree concerning our Lord, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." That same Shepherd who of old snatched the lamb out of the jaw of the lion and delivered his sheep from the paw of the bear; that same Shepherd who, in pangs of death, took the lion of hell by the beard and slew him; that same shepherd sits as King in the Jerusalem above, and all his saints delight to do him homage. All hail, thou Son of David! Reign thou for ever! Hosanna unto thee! Thine enemies cannot dispossess thee; thou hast smitten them terribly, and they shall yet feel the terror of thine arm. the Shepherd reigns, Jesus Christ is King of God's Church, and one of these days the reign of David will blossom into the reign of Solomon. We shall see Jesus Christ under a yet more glorious type, for he shall reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth. There shall be no war with the Ammonites, no war anywhere; all enemies shall have been put beneath his feet, and the kings of the nations shall bow before him, and they that dwell in the wilderness shall lick the dust. May that millennial splendor soon dawn, when the Son of David shall be King for ever and ever as the great Shepherd, reigning over all lands. Think these five illustrations over, and there will be much instruction here concerning him who feeds his flock like a shepherd.

## **II.** Now let the Christian who is not weary follow me in three NEW TESTAMENT DESCRIPTIONS.

Jesus Christ the Shepherd, is described in the New Testament, as I dare say you all remember, in three ways. He is first of all spoken of as the good Shepherd, next, as the great Shepherd, and thirdly, as the chief Shepherd. I do not know that any other adjective is appended to his name of Shepherd. First, turn to the tenth of John, there you find him described as the good Shepherd. "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Goodness is

the special excellence which seems to gleam in the character of our Lord in his earthly life and in his passion for the sons of men. As I look upon my Lord and Master here, despised and rejected of men, I know he is the great Shepherd, but his greatness does not strike me; his flock is so few. We read in the Acts that "the number of the names together were about one hundred and twenty." "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay my head." Herein is goodness, but the greatness is concealed. When he saw the multitude, he had compassion upon them, for they were as sheep having no shepherd. Here is the good Shepherd: he healed their sicknesses and wept over their sins—here is goodness indeed. When it was time for him to die, he crossed the brook Kedron, and suffered till he sweat great drops in the garden; he went to trial and condemnation, and then to the mount of doom, to suffer, bleed, and die. Here is the good Shepherd—the good Shepherd bleeding for the sheep. Can you tell me how good a Shepherd Jesus was? Can you measure the height and depth of the extraordinary goodness that dwelt in him?—so good that he saved others, himself he could not save—so good that when he rendered in his account, he could say, "I have lost none." He had kept them all safely, though he himself had bowed his head and given up the ghost.

You will find in Hebrews 13:20, that he is called the great Shepherd. Does that refer to his life on earth, and to his death? Not at all. Kindly observe the connection. "Now the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will." Do you perceive? He is not the great Shepherd when he dies: he is the good Shepherd, but he is the great Shepherd when he is brought again from the dead. In resurrection you perceive his greatness. He lies in the grave slumbering; he is the good Shepherd then, having laid down his life for the sheep; life appears again in him, the stone is rolled away, the watchmen are seized with terror, and he stands out the risen one, no more the dying—now he is the great Shepherd. He manifests Himself for forty days among his own disciples, and then at last taking them to the hill of Galilee a cloud receives him out of their sight, and up he mounts as the great Shepherd. When he has told them to go to Jerusalem, they sit waiting till the time of the fullness is come, and suddenly there is heard the sound of a rushing mighty wind, and fiery tongues sit upon all of them. Who has given this boon to each? Who is it? This is the great Shepherd. He has

ascended on high, and has received gifts for men; the Shepherd still you see, but now he is the great Shepherd, the Shepherd riding in triumphal state through the midst of New Jerusalem, amidst the acclamations of angels, and sending to his sheep down below the precious gift of apostles and ministers of various orders, according to his own will. He was the good Shepherd before, he is the good Shepherd now; but he is also pre-eminently the great Shepherd. Let us delight to think of this greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us extol and bless him. Observe, carefully, that while the good Shepherd lays down his life, that you may have life, and have it more abundantly, he is the great Shepherd for another purpose. What does it say? "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will." Yes, he dies to wash away your sin, but he rises for your justification and your complete sanctification, that as the Lord left his grave-clothes behind him, you may leave your sins behind you; and as he left the tomb behind him, never to enter it, you may leave the old dead world in which you once lived, and live in newness of life.

We have a third text remaining-the first Epistle of Peter, fifth chapter and fourth verse. Here you have the Savior called the chief Shepherd. When is this? In Peter he is not the good Shepherd- he is not the great Shepherd-he is all that, but he is a great deal more-he is the chief Shepherd. When will he wear this title? Do you notice, beloved, this one thing; let me have your hearts here. While he is the good Shepherd he is all alone, no other mentioned; while he is the great Shepherd he is still alone, and only a bare hint of others, but when he is the chief Shepherd, it is implied that there are others among whom he is chief. Notice, then, that in the atonement Jesus is alone-there is no one with the good Shepherd: in resurrection for our justification he is alone-no one aids the great Shepherd: but at the second advent he will be with his people chief among many. Read the verse: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." So you see Christ is the chief Shepherd at the second advent; then shall the world be astonished to find that though alone in atonement, and alone in justification, he is not alone in service or in glory. Then every minister who has fed his sheep, every teacher who has fed his lambs- all of you, holy men and women, who have in any way whatever contributed under him towards the guidance, and the government, and the feeding, and the protection of his dear, blood-bought flock-you shall appear. He has no crown, you perceive, as the good Shepherd; we do not read of a crown for him as the great Shepherd, but when he comes with the



crown wherewith his mother crowned him, then shall ye also appear with him in glory, having the crown of life that fadeth not away. I do not know whether this peculiar circumstance interests you, but it did me when I observed it: Good in his dying, great in his rising, chief in his coming. It seems to me to gather such force-good to me as a sinner, great to me as a saint, chief to me as one with him in his glorious reign. I pass, as it were, through three stages-a sinner, then I look to the good Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep; I reach higher ground, and I am a saint, I look to the great Shepherd to make me perfect in every good work to do his will; I mount higher still, I die, I rise again, I walk in resurrection life, and now I look to the chief Shepherd, and hope to receive at his hands the crown of life which he shall give to me, and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing, the good, great, chief Shepherd. May God give us grace, meditating upon these things, to know them and enter into them.

**III.** In conclusion I promised one or two IMPRESSIVE APPLICATIONS. The first application is one of comfort and satisfaction to you who are poor, needy, weary, troubled lambs or sheep of the flock. Our own text runs thus, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." What next? "He shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." The lambs have not the value of mature sheep, yet they are the most thought of under the great Shepherd. They might fetch the least price in the market, but they have the greatest portion of his heart. You needy, troubled ones, I want you to look here and note down in your memories that though there are promises for all saints, there are special promises for you. Jesus Christ will take care that the lambs and those who are with young, shall be specially housed. Notice this in Jacob, whom I introduced to you as the toiling shepherd; when he met with Esau, Esau wanted him to accept a guard to go with him, but lie said, "My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die." Jesus, the good Shepherd, will not travel at such a rate as to overdrive the lambs. He has tender consideration for the poor and needy. Kings usually look to the interests of the great, and the rich, but in the kingdom of our great Shepherd, he cares most for the poor. "He shall judge the poor of the people." The weaklings and the sickly of the flock are the special objects of the Savior's care. A proof of this you find at the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel, sixteenth verse, "I will seek that which

was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was sick.” Inexpressibly comforting words to the broken, sick, needy, Christian! Thou thinkest dear heart, that thou art forgotten, because of thy nothingness and weakness, and poverty. This is the very reason why thou art remembered. There is a mother here this morning: she has seven children; I know what child she has been thinking of while we have been preaching. She has not been thinking of John, who is married and away, nor of Mary who is in health, nor of Thomas who is sitting by her side, but she has been thinking of the poor little one at home in bed, and she has wondered whether it has had any sleep this morning, and whether it has been well taken care of. You know that my guess is correct. Now Jesus Christ, our loving Shepherd, if he should forget those of us who are strong and in sound health, will be sure to recollect the sickly ones. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arms and carry them in his bosom. He shall gently lead those that are with young.

A second application containing comfort and warning too. Sinner, to you our Lord Jesus Christ now represents himself as being a Shepherd who is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Here are his own words: “What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing; and calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me for I have found the sheep which was lost.” Such is Jesus now, looking after stray sheep. Where are you, where are you this morning? The great Shepherd comes after you, and oh, what joy will be in his heart, what joy there will be in heaven when the great Shepherd shall throw you on his shoulders and bring you home.

But hark you. Did you ever notice that the same Shepherd who saves the lost, will curse the finally impenitent? He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, “Depart ye cursed.” What lips are those which pronounce those dreadful words? The Shepherd’s lips; the lips of that same Shepherd who flies over the mountains to the lost sheep, of whom I trust it will yet be said, “We were as sheep going astray, but we have now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.” That same seeker of the lost and gatherer together of them that are scattered, will say, Depart

ye cursed into everlasting fire in hell prepared for the devil and his angels. Oh, sinner, may you know the Shepherd as binding up your broken bones and healing your wounds, and rejoicing over your saved soul, for if you do not, you will have to know him in another and more terrible character, when he shall curse you, separating you from his own sheep as the Shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.

So we shall conclude with these words, which may be for both saint and sinner. Let it never be forgotten, that in all we have said about Jesus Christ, still, as a Shepherd, he is pre-eminently to be preached as the suffering One. I began with Abel and I must conclude with Abel. Zeehariah has recorded these remarkable words of Jehovah, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." O sinner, you have most of all to do to-day with the Abel-shepherd- with the Shepherd dead at the altar; with the Shepherd with his blood crying up to heaven, with the sword of Jehovah in his bowels. You shall know about the toiling-shepherd by-and-by; the Shepherd reigning in Egypt, the Joseph you shall know soon; the Shepherd of the separated flock, you shall follow ere long; the Shepherd reigning in Jerusalem, the David you shall rejoice to serve; but now you have to do with the Shepherd bleeding and dying. Hark to these words, and I have done: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Herein is Jesus to be seen, suffering, bleeding, dying, on yonder accursed tree. He is there, the Shepherd to whom if we look we shall live, and live for ever. God enable you to turn those poor eyes of yours which have been red with weeping over sin, or red with the drunkenness of wickedness, and see in Jesus Christ your iniquity put away, Jehovah reconciled, and your souls eternally saved. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-John 10:1-18;24-29.***

# A BLOW FOR PUSEYISM.

NO. 653

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 8TH, 1865,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”-John 6:63.*

OUR Lord had plainly told his hearers that he was the bread of life; and that except they ate his flesh and drank his blood there was no life in them. His hearers understood this in a sensual manner, and they very naturally put the question, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Now the Savior had never intended to be understood in a carnal manner. It was far enough from his design to inculcate the carnal eating of his body, and therefore he at once told them that his words were not understood; and delivered himself of a great general principle, as truly applicable to our day as to his own. In effect he taught them just this: “It is not the eating my flesh in a carnal way, even if you could do it, which would be of any service to you; for that would be only feeding the flesh, which profiteth nothing. A spiritual feeding can alone quicken and bless you. It is this which you cannot understand; and therefore you hear my words as if they were as dead and fleshly as yourselves, whereas my teaching bears no gross and sensuous meaning, for the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

If I mistake not, this verse contains a great principle which needs in these days to be proclaimed as on the housetops. It is, the medicine which would cure the diseases of this present time if men were divinely led to receive it. The text is very deep; like all the teaching of our Savior recorded by John, the words are extremely simple, but the mystery is most profound. May the Holy Ghost lead us all not only to comprehend its teaching, but to feel its power.

What is meant by “the flesh” here? The word “flesh” in Scripture has eleven or twelve different modifications of its one abiding meaning. In this passage it means that which is outward and sensuous, and appeals to the eye, or the ear, or to other powers of man’s bodily nature. There was much of this in the Jewish faith; but whenever the worshippers rested in it and did not reach to its spiritual teaching, it profited them nothing. Paul uses the same term when speaking to the Judaizing Galatians, he asks them, “Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” which we understand to mean, having begun by God’s Holy Spirit with a spiritual love to God, a spiritual faith in Jesus, and a spiritual life within, do you mean now to be made perfect by external ordinances, resting and abiding in them as though they had a power to bless. External ceremonial religion is well and aptly set forth here as “flesh.” \What is the meaning of the term “spirit” here? If the Holy Spirit had been intended in the judgment of our translators, they would have placed a capital S. It cannot, however, refer to the Holy Spirit, because the explanatory key sentence is this:

“The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit;” now words cannot be the Holy Spirit as we all know. The word spirit stands here in contrast with the term “flesh.” Flesh is external religion, the carnal part of it, that which the eye sees and the ear hears: spirit is the inward part of religion, that which the soul understands, receives, believes, and feeds upon. This it is, this spiritual element in religion which quickens it and makes it a living thing, while the mere external, the flesh, except as the Spirit quickens it profiteth nothing. This spiritual religion is consistent with the spiritual nature which God the Holy Ghost gives to us, and as Christ’s teachings are themselves living and spiritual, they are the proper food of spiritual men. The Jews commonly thought that religion lay in ceremonial observances, in eating certain meats or abstinence from them, in washings of the hands before meat, in divers baptisms, in goings up to the temple to pray, and such like outward performances. Jesus tells them to their faces that this flesh religion profiteth nothing; it is dead, unquickened, and unquickening. What then is the life of godliness? What is the vitality and essence of acceptable worship? His answer virtually is, “It is not your outward observances, but your inward emotions, desires, believings, and adorings, which are living worship.” Then he adds in effect, “My words are not concerning outward observances, but are of a spiritual character. I come not to you with ‘touch not, taste not, handle not,’ or with ‘wash, vow, stand, sit, kneel:’ my words deal with inner life and spirit, and are

addressed to your spiritual natures. The words which I speak unto you are spirit and life.”

**I.** Our first point will be THE UNPROFITABLE FLESH, — the external observances of religion in themselves utterly unprofitable.

To begin with the greatest monstrosity of this kind in the present day, the real and corporeal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in what is superstitiously called the Blessed Sacrament. I should scarcely mention this if it were a doctrine merely of the Church of Rome, but when I read the newspapers and other productions of the High Church party, I find that transubstantiation with all its fullness of absurdity is extensively preached and believed in the Church of England, and there are hundreds of clergy who speak of the Lord’s table as an altar, and of the supper as the celebration of a sacrifice, while the symbols are spoken of as though they were to be revered even as the Lord himself. It is laid down as a doctrine, that every time the bread is broken by these priests, the very body of Jesus Christ is actually received by the persons participating. That this is monstrously absurd, methinks every intelligent person knows; but it has been said that the more absurd it is, the more room there is for faith, and hence some have even been thankful for having its absurdity proved, for then they have argued, “It will be the more meritorious for us to believe it.” To such persons we would briefly say, if Jesus Christ’s body be really received into your mouth, broken with your teeth, and made to enter into your stomach, then, in the first place, you are guilty of a gross act of cannibalism and nothing better, inasmuch as you eat human flesh; and, in the next place, you cannot derive any virtue therefrom, for Jesus Christ tells you at once, “It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing.” If you did actually eat the very body of Christ, it would affect your digestive and secretive organs, and through them your flesh, just as other bread, or, if you like it better, other flesh would do; but how could this affect your heart and soul. Does grace operate through the stomach, and save us through our bowels? Prove this, and you will make converts of us. But do not men receive the body and blood of Christ in the Lord’s supper? Yes, spiritual men do, in a real and spiritual sense, but not in a carnal sort; -not so as to crush it with their teeth, or taste it with their palate, or digest it by the gastric juice; but they receive the Lord Jesus, as incarnate, and crucified, into their spirits, as they believe in him, love him, and are comforted by thoughts of him. “But how is that a real reception of him?” cries one. Alas, this question reveals at once the world’s thoughts;

ye think the carnal alone real, and that the spiritual is unreal. If you can touch and taste ye think it real, but if you can only meditate and love, you dream it to be unreal. How impossible it is for the carnal mind to enter into spiritual things! Yet, hearken once again, I receive the body and blood of Christ when my soul believes in his incarnation, when my heart relies upon the merit of his death, when the bread and wine so refresh my memory that thoughts of Jesus Christ and his agonies melt me to penitence, cheer me to confidence, and purify me from sin. It is not my body which receives Jesus, but my spirit; I believe in him, casting myself alone upon him; trusting him, I feel joy and peace, love and zeal, hatred of sin and love of holiness, and so as to my spiritual nature I am fed upon him. My spiritual nature feeds upon truth, love, grace, promise, pardon, covenant, atonement, acceptance, all of which I find, and much more, in the person of the Lord Jesus. Up to the extent in which my spirit has communion with the Lord Jesus, the ordinance of breaking of bread is living and acceptable, because the spiritual element quickens it; but to the extent in which I merely receive the bread and wine, and my spirit is not exercised about Jesus Christ-to that extent it profiteth me nothing-it is a mere external ceremony and nothing more. The bread is only bread, the wine is merely wine, the eating is simply eating bread and no more; the whole outward ceremony is what it seems to be and not a jot more; but the unseen fellowship of hearts with Jesus, this is the quickening element, and this alone.

The same principle applies in the case of Baptism. According to God's Word, Romans 6:4, and Colossians 2:12, baptism sets forth our union with Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. Is there anything in the water in which the person is immersed? Nothing whatever. Is there conveyed by the water, or in the water, any spiritual gift or grace? Not in any way; except so far as this-if the water reminds the spiritual nature in the man of the death of Christ, so that his spirit enjoys communion with Christ in his death; if the water forcibly portrays to him the Savior's burial, so that his spirit feels itself to be buried to the world; if rising out of the water reminds the man of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that he, in spirit rises from a dead world into a newness of life, then there is life in the baptism-the spirit quickeneth it;-but the mere water, the carnal part of the ordinance, in itself, profiteth nothing. The putting away of the filth of the flesh is nought, but the answer of a good conscience toward God is the vitality of baptism. It is only vital up to the extent in which the spirit exercises itself. This tells strongly against the baptism of infants. We do not enter on this subject

from love of controversy, but the question is fairly involved in the subject. If the baptised person, infant or adult, enters in spirit into the meaning and teaching of baptism he is truly baptised; but, inasmuch, as in our firm conviction a babe does not enter in spirit into the subject at all, it has only received the unprofitable baptism of the flesh, since the spirit which quickeneth was absent. Whether you be infants or adults, if your renewed spirit enters into the form, it quickens the form, and makes it live; but if you come to it without spiritual life, and without exercising spiritual emotions, the water, the fleshly part of the ordinance, profiteth you nothing. It is only so far as your spirit has fellowship with Jesus Christ in it, both in the act and in after meditation upon it, that baptism becomes of the slightest possible profit to you. We put the two ordinances together and say to you, you will find in these just as much as your spirit shall get from them, and not an atom more. Only so far as the symbol aids thought and emotion can it be of service; the outward does not profit a little, it profiteth nothing whatever.

Take next the doctrine of the apostolical succession. There are certain persons still out of Bedlam who say of all ministers but those of their own sect, no matter how much the Lord may have honored them in the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints, that they are intruders and not true ministers of Jesus Christ. Their clerics are the legitimate successors of the apostles, and they only. For the moment we will allow the historical question: we will suppose that up to Judas, or some other apostle, they can trace a line through Popes of Rome, or Archbishops of Canterbury; we will suppose that a little stream comes trickling down to them through the dunghill of the dark ages, having its original rise in the apostolic era. Well, what now? Hear ye this word, "The flesh profiteth nothing." The mere fleshly connection between bishop and bishop, established by successive layings on of hands and anointings, is utterly valueless. The great question is concerning the spiritual succession. Do we see in you the same spirit that was in the apostles? Open your mouths, and let us hear the same simple, unadorned gospel which the apostles proclaimed. Let us hear you say with Paul, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years, I am afraid of you lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." Let us hear from your lips the doctrines of grace, and faithful warnings against looking for salvation by our own works. Let us perceive that you are free from the beggarly elements of ceremonialism, and are not to be judged in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday,



or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath. (Colossians 2:16.) Is there as little pomp about you as about the tentmaker of old? Whence come these silk chasubles, albs of fine linen, stoles of watered silk, maniples, copes, and garments covered with gold and silver and embroidery? The apostolic fishermen surely did not fish for souls in such fine raiment! Show us apostolic simplicity, faith, and truthfulness! We care not a fig either way for your fleshly succession, we demand that you prove your spiritual one. It was a tolerably impudent thing for a bishop once to say, in reference to John Williams, and other missionaries in the South Sea Islands, "They act as pioneers, they prepare the way for a more regular force. The missionary in due time is followed by the Churchman, who erects the converts into an orderly edifice, having for its foundation th3 lively stones of an apostolical priesthood, qualified to offer the oblation of a spiritual sacrifice." Now, my Lord Bishop, you shall yourself decide which is the more apostolic, yourself at home at ease, in enjoyment and luxury, or John Williams, travelling from island to island, with his life in his hand, casting down idols by the power of the gospel, and transforming savages into Christian men! You live in state, and he dies a martyr; you boast, and he toils; you talk of your own priesthood, and he of Jesus Christ; you are filled with zeal for a sect, and he with love for souls: surely if wit remains beneath your mitre, you yourself can judge which of the two is the more apostolical. If the apostle Paul himself came to find out his successor, where would he look for him, in the missionary doing apostolic work, or in the bishop talking about what he will do after the other has laid the foundation and stained it with his blood? When we see the divine calling of our honored pastors denied, and hear the impudent claims of a tribe of hireling priests, we can only cry, "To what an extent pretense may run!" Let them boast the fleshly succession, but let us seek spiritual union with the apostle's Lord. The Puseyites of our Savior's day said, "We have Abraham for our father," just as these say, "We are the successors of the apostles;" and we meet our modern Pharisees with the same rebuke with which the Baptist met their ancient types, "They which are of faith, these are children of Abraham," and successors of the apostles too. Let us remain content with spiritually following Jesus, and doing his work; and let the sons of the bondwoman boast a worthless fleshly succession if they will, "It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing."

These things more concern other people than ourselves, therefore let us come a little nearer home. Much is said now-a-days about an ornate form

of worship. The excellency of melodious music is much extolled. The swell of the organ, it is said, begets a hallowed frame of mind. But how far is the effect sensuous, and how far spiritual? Is it not to be feared that an anthem in a service is often no more a spiritual exercise than a glee at a concert. Music has charms, and he who cannot feel them is to be pitied; but, then, acceptable heart-worship is quite another thing; no arrangement of notes and chords can ever do the work of God the Holy Spirit. Unless music can aid in making sinners penitent, in leading souls to Jesus Christ, or uplifting saints in holy joy to the throne of God, we must hold that in vital godliness it profiteth nothing.

Architecture, with its arched roofs, and noble pillars, and dim religious light, is supposed to impart a reverence and awe which befit the solemn engagements of the Sabbath, and draw the mind towards the invisible God. Well, if combinations of stone can sanctify the spirit of man, it is a pity that the gospel did not prescribe architecture as the remedy for the ruin of the fall; if gorgeous buildings make men love God, and long-drawn aisles renovate men's spiritual nature, build, all ye builders, both day and night. If bricks and mortar can lead us to heaven, alas for the confusion which stopped the works at Babel. If there be such a connection between spires and spiritual things as to make human hearts beat in unison with the will of God, then build high and loftily, and lavish your gold and silver; but if all that you produce is sensuous, and nothing more, then turn ye to living stones, and seek to build up a spiritual house with spiritual means.

We are told, now-a-days, that the pompous array of ministering priests, the beauty of symbology, the painting of windows, the smoke of incense, and so on, tend to draw people into the place of worship, and that when there, they aid in elevating their minds. What saith Scripture about it all? This thing was tried among the Jews, and Christ's remark when he comes to sum up the long trial is, "It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing." The real inward spirit of man is not blessed by sounds which charm the ear but appeal not to the understanding, nor by colors which delight the eye but gladden not the affections of man. To gratify taste is well enough for the carnal, but it profiteth nothing in the sight of God. It may be as well to be artistic as to be plain, but it is of no matter either way, if tested by the Word: in the balances of the sanctuary these matters are lighter than vanity.

We must make precisely the same remark concerning eloquence. Here we deal more closely with our own brethren, who in this thing look to the flesh as others do. Many persons have come to think that oratorical ability is essential in the minister. It is not enough, some think, to preach the truth with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, we must also preach it in the wisdom of words with excellency of speech. The trappings of oratory, and the drapery of eloquence, are thought to be profitable. Ah! dear friends, one half of the emotions excited in our places of worship are of no more value than those excited at the theater. The mere ring of words is no more than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. "The flesh profiteth nothing." So far as the truth itself moves our inmost souls, preaching is of real service; but if that which you hear only commends itself to you because of the sweet voice that speaks it, or the telling tones in which it is delivered, your hearing is a carnal exercise, and profiteth you nothing. It is only when your spirit grasp the truths, when your heart embraces Christ, when your soul beholds God by the eye of faith, that you derive benefit.

We may bring this principle to bear on the revivals over which we have watched with much hope, but with more anxiety. In many revivals there has been too much aim at getting up an excitement, a carnal enthusiasm. Excited persons pray one after the other, excited persons speak, and the stamp and motion of the hand, and the tear trickling from the eye—all these are supposed to be of great service. I grant you that excitement may sometimes be used by God to stir the spirit of man, but unless, my dear hearers, your religion is based on something more than animal excitement, it is based upon a lie. Your spirit must come to know its ruin before God, and be humbled; your spirit must come to take hold of Jesus Christ and believe in him; your spirit must undergo the divine change which only God the Holy Spirit can work, or else that excitement shall be nothing more than the blowing up of a bubble, which shall burst and leave not a vestige behind. Take care of any religion which merely tickles your fancy, excites your passions, or stirs your blood. True grace penetrates the very core of our nature, it changes the heart, subdues the will, renews the passions, and makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus.

To come yet closer to ourselves, in the matter of prayer and the ordinances of God's house, I am afraid we too often forget this great rule, that it is the spirit that quickeneth, and that the flesh profiteth nothing. We pray, I suppose, as a matter of habit, every morning and evening, but how often we spend our few minutes, and we rise from our knees satisfied, and if

anybody should ask, "Have you been praying?" we should say, "Yes;" whereas it has been the flesh prayer, the dead form without the life of the heart. In reality there has been no prayer at all. It has been the flesh, which profiteth nothing. It is only that prayer in which the spirit talks with God that is real prayer at all. The carnal man is quite satisfied if he can get through a certain string of expressions, but the spiritual man is not content with this. Luther used to complain very much of distractions in prayer, and some said they could not understand it. "No," Luther might have said, "I dare say you cannot, for, being unspiritual, you do not understand spiritual difficulties. Bernard complained much of the wandering of his thoughts in prayer, and when some one said he thought Bernard must be a very great sinner to let his thoughts wander so, Bernard said, "I will give you a trial. I will give you a horse, if you can say the Lord's Prayer and think of nothing else." So the man began, "Our Father which art in heaven," when he stopped short, and turning round, said, "But you must give me the bridle to get him home with." So hard is it to keep the mind upon the object of devotion. While the sinner's words are going up to God, he thinks that he is praying, whereas he has not prayed at all, unless his heart has talked with God. Why, brethren, some of the best prayers that have ever been prayed had not a single word to express them with; they were heart-prayers, and went up to heaven in all their naked unclothed glory, like disembodied spirits, and God accepted them. Many a prayer that has had the choicest words to garnish it, has been nothing but a dead prayer wrapped up in ceremonies, and only fit to be cast into the grave for ever.

So with public worship. You would feel unhappy if you had spent the whole Sunday without going to a place of worship, but you are quite at ease if you come here and leave your hearts at home. When we are singing, you sing with us, and when we are praying, you cover your eyes too, and when we are preaching, some of you think of what I am talking about, and some do not; but when you get through the appointed hour, you feel quite easy: but oh! remember that the mere carnal act of being here, profiteth nothing. Oh! dear friends, do shake off the idea, that going up to a place of worship, or opening a Bible, or reading family prayer, or kneeling down, can, as mere acts, save your souls. I do not speak against them as to their profit in some respects, but as to salvation and the real vital work, which is acceptable before God, the mere form profiteth nothing. It is only as your spirit prays, as your spirit seeks, as your spirit worships, as your spirit listens to God's Word, that there is any quickening power in it whatsoever.

Once more. There are certain persons who take considerable delight in having seen, as they think, visions, and other manifestations of Christ with their eyes, and having heard certain texts mysteriously spoken in their ears. Now I am not going to deny that you may have seen these visions and heard these sounds. I do not think you did, but whether you did or not, is no matter, they profit you nothing. That which merely comes to this eye is nothing, it must come to the soul's eye of faith. That which comes to this ear is nothing, unless it gets into the heart's ear, unless your soul hears it. If I were to see all the devils in hell, I should not think myself damned because of that, and if you have seen all the angels in heaven, you must not think you are saved because of that. It is not what a man sees with eyes, or hears with ears, it is what the spirit receives which saves the soul. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

## **II.** The text mentions the QUICKENING SPIRIT.

That which puts life into our religion is its being received and acted out by a spiritual nature. For, first of all, it is the spiritual nature which quickens the man. The man who has not received by the work of God the Holy Spirit a spiritual nature, is described by Paul as being dead in trespasses and sins. The Spirit finds men carnal, and breathes into them a new and better nature, and then they themselves become, what they never were before, quickened, spiritual men. This spirit of theirs is a quickening spirit, for it quickens all the ordinances. A carnal man is baptised; but it is the fleshly baptism which profiteth nothing. A spiritual man cometh to baptism, and he is baptised, and he quickens the baptism; it becomes a real living baptism to him, for he has fellowship with Jesus Christ in it. A carnal man comes to the Lord's supper, and he eats and drinks, what? "Damnation unto himself, not discerning the Lord's body." A spiritual man comes there, and he eats and drinks, and what then? Why it becomes a living ordinance to him, the bread sets forth to him the body of Christ, and the wine sets forth the blood, and in spirit he feeds upon his incarnate Savior. The possession of a spiritual nature, and the exercise of that spiritual nature in the ordinances quickens them. So it is with prayer; the mere act of speaking one form of words is of no more profit than the repeating of any other. The Lord's Prayer, said backwards, is quite as acceptable to God as the Lord's Prayer said forwards unless the spirit enters into it. You might as well repeat the multiplication table as repeat the collect of the day as far as God is concerned, unless your spirit prays. But when the spirit is

engaged in repentance, in faith, in joy, in love, then the prayer is quickened. So with all the actions of man's life. If I give bread to the hungry, if I visit the sick, if I subscribe towards a good object- that is all nothing, unless my heart is in the deed. But if I feed the poor because I love Jesus, if I seek to glorify God in my deeds of charity and holiness, they become living actions. Apart from all that they profit nothing to me before God. The spiritual part of my nature must quicken my whole life and make it real life, or else it will be a dead carnal existence before the Lord.

The spiritual nature has for its author the divine Father. The sixty-fifth verse of the chapter in which our text is found tells us, that no man can come unto Christ except it be given him of the Father. To be spiritual is a gift of God the Father. He hath begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The new life is the actual operation of the Holy Spirit: no man becomes spiritual except the Holy Spirit enters into him. Deity comes into contact with humanity and quickens the spiritual man. The mark by which this spirituality is discovered is faith. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Every man who rests upon Christ for salvation has the proof of his being spiritual. Modes of speech, or dress, or worship, are not the marks of the spiritual, but simple, spiritual faith in the Lord Jesus.

True religion has always been spiritual, but mere professors have ever been content with the outward form alone. Among the Jews when symbols were abundant, the mass either stuck fast in the types and could get no farther, or else they went clean away to idolatry. In these latter times, the Lord has taken away almost all that is ceremonial in our religion. Two simple forms alone remains; and now there is another grand trial to see whether men can live in a spiritual religion, and that trial has come to prove just this, that none can do so but those who are born of God. The most of mankind cannot get on with a religion in which there is nothing to see, nothing to please the ear, or to gratify their taste. It is only the spiritual man who is so overwhelmed with the glories of God that he does not need the glories of man; so overcome with the splendor of Christ that he does not want the splendor of the mass; so taken up with the magnificence of the great High Priest that he does not care for gorgeously apparelled priests. Blessed is that man who seeth though his eye be blind, who heareth though his ear be deaf, who tasteth though his appetite fail, who liveth though his heart and flesh fail: blessed is he who seeth him who is invisible, and hath revealed unto him what eye hath not seen, and what ear hath not heard.

This will not suit many of you; a religion of thinking and believing is too hard for you. Repenting, believing, trusting-these things men will not do. They will kneel down any quantity of times, they will even, if told by a priest, lick the floor with their tongues, or they will walk with peas in their shoes, or whip their backs, but when it comes to believing, hoping, trusting, fearing, and so on, men are so little inclined to mental operations, especially under the dictation of a higher authority, that they will not have anything to do with them. "What!" they say, "a religion in which there is nothing for me to see! What! an unseen altar?" Yes, an unseen altar. "Am I not to see the sacrifice?" No. "Never to see it? Then I do not understand it. What! a God, but no symbols! No crucifixes! no crosses! What! no holy wafer, no sacred place, nothing sacred." No, nothing visible to be revered, nothing whatever but the unseen God. "What! not even my place of worship, is not that to be holy?" No, if you be a Christian, all places must alike be sacred to you. "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father, but those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." You must be yourself a temple, and God must dwell in you; you must be yourself a priest, and everywhere you must offer spiritual sacrifice. "The spirit quickeneth, but the flesh profiteth nothing."

### **III.** The Savior tells us in the closing sentence THAT HIS WORDS ARE SPIRIT AND LIFE.

Beloved, never was there a more true sentence spoken. Listen to other teachers, and you get precepts concerning washing, eating, bowing, etc., which are fleshly; but hear Jesus and his words, all aim at the heart. Listen to the Puscycite, and hear his word: "You should take care to attend Matins, and early celebrations, in our holy and beautiful Church; you should decorate the altar, get a surpliced choir, have processions, and put on the holy garments."

Now, you see at once that these are not spiritual things: these are not life. Ritual performances are very pretty spectacles for silly young ladies, and sillier men to gaze upon, but there is no shadow of spirit or life in them. The High Church ritual does not look like a divine thing; on the contrary, if I stand among the throng, and gaze at all its prettinesses, it looks amazingly like a nursery game, or a stage-play. Want of taste, say you. Not so, I reply; my eyes admire your glittering colors, and the splendor of your services is taking to me, as a man; I enjoy the swell of your organ, and I

can even put up with the smell of your incense (if you buy it good), but my spirit does not care for these fooleries, it turns away sickened, and cries, "There is nothing here for me; there is no more nourishment for the spirit in all this than there is food for man in a swine's trough. The words of Jesus Christ are throughout unceremonial and unformal-they are spirit and they are life, and we turn to them with all the greater zest after having seen enough of your childish things.

On my Lord's words I fix my hope in the battle now waging with ceremonialism, and I wish that all ministers of Christ would scorn to use any other weapons. I know the talk is, that we ought to vie with the false Churches in the beauty of our services, but this is a temptation of the devil. If the simple preaching of the cross will not attract the people, let them stop away. Let the Lord's servants abjure the sword and shield of Saul, and go forth with the gospel sling and stone. Our weapons are the words of Jesus-these are spirit and these are life. Architecture, apparel, music, liturgies, these are neither spirit nor life: let those rest on them who will; we can do without them, by God's help. Our sires, in the Puritanic age, fought and won the battles of Christ without these things. In later days, Whitfield stirred his age with nothing but the Word of God. Rowlands and Christmas Evans roused the men of Wales with no attraction but the cross. My dear brethren in Christ, ministers of the gospel who are now present, let me conjure you, stand to the gospel. Set your backs against the tendency of the times to depart from the simplicity of Jesus Christ. If men will not come to hear us because we preach the gospel, draw them by no other attractions. I rejoice in the vast crowd so constantly assembled here, because my enemies themselves are witnesses that there is nothing in me to which the honor can be ascribed. An uplifted Savior draws all men to him still. Dear friends, pray that the great and blessed Spirit, who first gives spiritual life, may continue to feed, and nourish, and perfect that life in you, until you shall come to that heaven where all is spiritual, where they need no candle, nor light of the sun; here no temple is found, because the Lord God and the Lamb is the temple thereof; where spiritual life shall be developed into its purest form; where, in spiritual bodies, 'you shall see the spiritual God, and reign before his throne, world without end. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-John 6:26***



# MEMORY-THE HANDMAID OF HOPE.

NO. 654

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 15TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.”-Lamentations 3:21.*

MEMORY is very often the servant of despondency. Despairing minds call to remembrance every dark foreboding in the past, and every gloomy feature in the present. Memory stands like a handmaiden, clothed in sackcloth, presenting to her master a cup of mingled gall and wormwood. Like Mercury, she hastes, with winged heel, to gather fresh thorns with which to fill the uneasy pillow, and to bind fresh rods with which to scourge the already bleeding heart. There is, however, no necessity for this. Wisdom will transform memory into an angel of comfort. That same recollection which may in its left hand bring so many dark and gloomy omens, may be trained to bear in its right hand a wealth of hopeful signs. She need not wear a crown of iron, she may encircle her brow with a fillet of gold, all spangled with stars. When Christian, according to Bunyan, was locked up in Doubting Castle, memory formed the crab-tree cudgel with which the famous giant beat his captives so terribly. They remembered how they had left the right road, how they had been warned not to do so, and how in rebellion against their better selves, they wandered into By-path Meadow. They remembered all their past misdeeds, their sins, their evil thoughts and evil words, and all these were so many knots in the cudgel, causing sad bruises and wounds in their poor suffering persons. But one night, according to Bunyan, this same memory which had scourged them, helped to set them free; for she whispered something in Christian's ear, and he cried out as one half amazed, “What a fool am I to lie in a 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." So he put his hand into his bosom, and with much joy he plucked out the key, and thrust it into the lock; and though the lock of the great iron gate, as Bunyan says, "went damnable hard," yet the key did open it, and all the others too; and so, by this blessed act of memory, poor Christian and Hopeful were set free.

Observe that the text records an act of memory on the part of Jeremiah: "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." In the previous verse he tells us that memory had brought him to despair: "My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me." And now he tells us that this same memory brought him to life and comfort yet again: "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." We lay it down, then, as a general principle, that if we would exercise our memories a little more, we might, in our very deepest and darkest distress, strike a match, which would instantaneously kindle the lamp of comfort. There is no need for God to create a new thing, in order to restore believers to joy; if they would prayerfully rake the ashes of the past, they would find light for the present; and if they would turn to the book of truth and the throne of grace, their candle would soon shine as aforetime.

I shall apply that general principle to the cases of three persons.

### **I.** First of all, to THE BELIEVER WHO IS IN DEEP TROUBLE.

This is no unusual position for an heir of glory. A Christian man is seldom long at ease: the believer in Jesus Christ through much tribulation inherits the kingdom. If you will kindly turn to the chapter which contains our text, you will observe a list of matters which recollection brought before the mind of the prophet Jeremiah, and which yielded him comfort. First stands the fact, that, however deep may be our present affliction, it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. This is a low beginning certainly. The comfort is not very great, but when a very weak man is at the bottom of the pyramid, if he is ever to climb it, you must not set him a long step at first; give him but a small stone to step upon the first time, and when he gets more strength then he will be able to take a greater stride. Now, consider, thou son of sorrow, where thou mightest have been. Look down now through the gloomy portals of the grave to that realm of darkness, which is as the valley of the shadow of death, full of confusion, and without any order. Canst thou discern the sound as of the rushing to and fro of hosts of guilty and tormented spirits? Dost thou hear their dolorous

wailing and their fearful gnashing of teeth? Can thine ears endure to hear the clanking of their chains, or thine eyes to see the fury of the flames? They are for ever, for ever, for ever shut out from the presence of God, and shut in with devils and despair! They lie in flames of misery so terrible, that the dream of a despairing maniac cannot realize their woe. God hath cast them away, and pronounced his curse upon them, appointing them blackness of darkness for ever. This might have been thy lot. Contrast thy present position with theirs, and thou hast cause rather to sing than to lament. "Why should a living man complain?" Have you seen those foul dungeons of Venice, which are below the water-mark of the canal, where, after winding through narrow, dark, stifling passages, you may creep into little cells in which a man can scarcely stand upright where no ray of sunlight has ever entered since the foundations of the palace were laid—cold, foul, and black with damp and mildew, the fit nursery of fever, and abode of death? And yet those places it were luxury to inhabit compared with the everlasting burnings of hell. It were an excess of luxury to lost spirits if they could lie there with moss growing on their eyelids, in lonely misery, if they might but escape for a little season from a guilty conscience and the wrath of God. Friend, you are neither in those dungeons nor yet in hell; therefore pluck up courage, and say, "It is of the Lord's mercy we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." Slender comfort this may be, but then, if this flame shall yield but little heat, it may lead to somewhat better. When you are kindling your household lire, before which you hope to sit down with comfort, you do not first expect to kindle the lumps of coal, but you set some lighter fuel in a blaze, and soon the more solid material yields a genial glow; so this thought, which may seem so light to you, may be as the kindling of a heavenly fire of comfort for you who now are shivering in your grief.

Something better awaits us, for Jeremiah reminds us that there are some mercies, at any rate, which are still continued. "His compassions fail not, they are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." You are very poor and have come down for wealth. This is very hard, still you are in good health. Just walk into the hospital, ask to be permitted to witness the work done in the operating room; sit down by one bedside and listen to the story of pain and weariness; and surely you will leave the hospital feeling, "I thank God that with all my poverty I have not sickness to complain of, and therefore I will sing of the mercies which I enjoy." Are you sick, and have you dragged your weary body to this house this morning? Then I shall

invite you to accompany me to those dark cellars and miserable attics where poverty pines away in wretched unpitied obscurity in the heart of this great city; and if you mark the hard earned meal, too scant to yield sufficient refreshment, and the miserable heap of straw which is their only rest, you will escape from the foul den of filthy penury, and say, "I will bear my sickness, for even that is better than filth, starvation, and nakedness." Evil your plight may be, but there are others in a still worse condition. You can always if you open your eyes and choose to do so, see at least this cause for thankfulness that you are not yet plunged into the lowest depth of misery. There is a very touching little story told of a poor woman with two children who had not a bed for them to lie upon, and scarcely any clothes to cover them. In the depth of winter they were nearly frozen, and the mother took the door of a cellar off the hinges, and set it up before the corner where they crouched down to sleep that some of the draught and cold might be kept from them. One of the children whispered to her when she complained of how badly off they were, "Mother, what do those dear little children do who have no cellar door to put up in front of them?" Even there, you see the little heart found cause for thankfulness; and we, if we are driven to our worst extremity, will still honor God by thanking him that his compassions fail not but are new every morning. This again is not a very high step, but still it is a little in advance of the other, and the weakest may readily reach it.

The chapter offers us a third source of consolation. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him." You have lost much Christian, but you have not lost your portion. Your God is your all; therefore, if you have lost all but God still you have your all left since God is all. The text does not say that God is a part of our portion, but the whole portion of our spirit; in Him we have all the riches of our heart concentrated. How can we be bereaved since our Father lives? How can we be robbed since our treasure is on high? It is daylight and the sun is shining bright, and I have a candle lit, but some one blows it out. Shall I sit me down and weep, because my candle is extinguished? Nay, not while the sun shines. If God be my portion, if I lose some little earthly comfort-I will not complain, for heavenly comfort remains. One of our kings, high and haughty in temper, had a quarrel with the citizens of London, and thought to alarm them by a dreadful threat that would cow the spirits of the bold burghers, for if they did not mind what they were at he would remove his Court from Westminster. Whereupon, the doughty Lord Mayor begged to

enquire whether His Majesty meant to take the Thames away, for so long as the river remained, his majesty might take himself wherever he pleased. Even so the world warns us, “you cannot hold out, you cannot rejoice : - this trouble shall come and that adversity shall befall.” We reply, so long as you cannot take our Lord away we will not complain. “Philosophers,” said the wise man, “can dance without music;” and true believers in God can rejoice when outward comforts fail them. He who drinks from the bottle as did the son of the bondwoman may have to complain of thirst; but he who dwells at the well as did Isaac, the child according to promise, shall never know lack. God grant us grace then to rejoice in our deepest distress, because the Lord is our sure possession our perpetual heritage of joy. We have now advanced to some degree of hope but there are other steps to ascend.

The prophet then reminds us of another channel of comfort, namely, that God is evermore good to all who seek him. “The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.” Let him smite never so hard, yet if we can maintain the heavenly posture of prayer we may rest assured that he will turn from blows to kisses yet. When a beggar wants an alms and is very needy, if he sees another beggar at the door of some great man he will watch while he knocks, and when the door is opened and the man is liberally entertained and generously helped, he who has been looking on knocks with boldness in his turn. My soul, art thou very sad and very low this morning? The Lord is good to them that seek him. Thousands have come from his door, but none have had reason to complain of a cold reception, for in every case he hath filled the hungry with good things. Therefore, my soul, go boldly and knock, for he giveth liberally and upbraideth not. In all states of dilemma or of difficulty prayer is an available source. Bunyan tells us that when the City of Mansoul was besieged it was the depth of winter and the roads were very bad, but even then prayer could travel them; and I will venture to affirm that if all earthly roads were so bad that they could not be traveled, and if Mansoul were so surrounded that there was not a gap left through which we could break our way to get to the king, yet the road upwards would always open. No enemy can barricade that; no blockading ships can sail between our souls and the haven of the mercy-seat. The ship of prayer may sail through all temptations, doubts and fears, straight up to the throne of God; and though she may be outward bound with only griefs, and groans, and sighs, she

shall return freighted with a wealth of blessings. There is hope then, Christian, for you are allowed to pray.

*“The mercy seat is open still,  
Here let our souls retreat.”*

We are getting into deeper water of joy, let us take another step, and this time we shall win greater consolation still, from the fact that it is good to be afflicted. “It is good that a man should bear the yoke in his youth.” A little child needs to be coaxed to take its medicine. It may be very ill, and mother may assure it that this medicine will work its cure; but the child says, “No, it is so bitter, I cannot take it.” But men need not thus to be persuaded. The bitter is nothing to them; they think of the health which it will bring, and so they take the draught, and do not even wince. Now we, if we be little children, and have not called to remembrance the fruit which affliction bears, may cry and murmur; but if we be men in Christ Jesus, and have learned that “all things work together for good to them that love God,” we shall take the cup right cheerfully and willingly, and bless God for it. Why should I dread to descend the shaft of affliction if it leads me to the gold mine of spiritual experience? Why should I cry out if the sun of my prosperity goes down, if in the darkness of my adversity I shall be the better able to count the starry promises with which my faithful God has been pleased to gem the sky? Go thou sun, for in thy absence we shall see ten thousand suns; and when thy blinding light is gone, we shall see worlds in the dark which were hidden from us by thy light. Many a promise is written in sympathetic ink, which you cannot read till the fire of trouble brings out the characters. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn thy statutes.” Beloved, Israel went into Egypt poor, but they came out of Egypt with jewels of silver and jewels of gold. They had worked, it is true, at the brick-kilns, and suffered bitter bondage, but they were bettered by it; they came out enriched by all their tribulations. A child had a little garden in which it planted many flowers, but they never grew. She put them in, as she thought tenderly and carefully, but they would not live. She sowed seeds and they sprang up; but very soon they withered away. So she ran to her father’s gardener, and when he came to look at it, he said, “I will make it a nice garden for you, that you may grow whatever you want.” He fetched a pick, and when the little child saw the terrible pick, she was afraid for her little garden. The gardener struck his tool into the ground and began to make the earth heave and shake for his pickaxe had caught the edge of a huge stone which underlay almost all the little

plot of ground. All the little flowers were turned out of their places and the garden spoiled for a season so that the little maid wept much. He told her he would make it a fair garden yet, and so he did, for having removed that stone which had prevented all the plants from striking root he soon filled the ground with flowers which lived and flourished. So the Lord has come, and has turned up all the soil of your present comfort to get rid of some big stone that was at the bottom of all your spiritual prosperity, and would not let your soul flourish. Do not weep with the child, but be comforted by the blessed results and thank your Father's tender hand.

One step more, and surely we shall then have good ground to rejoice. The chapter reminds us that these troubles do not last for ever. When they have produced their proper result they will be removed, for "the Lord will not cast off for ever." Who told thee that the night would never end in day? Who told thee that the sea would ebb out till there should be nothing left but a vast track of mud and sand? Who told thee that the winter would proceed from frost to frost, from snow, and ice, and hail, to deeper snow, and yet more heavy tempest? Who told thee this, I say? Knowest thou not that day follows night, that flood comes after ebb, that spring and summer succeed to winter? Hope thou then! Hope thou ever! for God fails thee not. Dost thou not know that thy God loves thee in the midst of all this? Mountains, when in darkness hidden, are as real as in day, and God's love is as true to thee now as it was in thy brightest moments. No father chastens always; he hates the rod as much as thou dost; he only cares to use it for that reason which should make thee willing to receive it, namely, that it works thy lasting good. Thou shalt yet climb Jacob's ladder with the angels, and behold him who sits at the top of it—thy covenant God. Thou shalt yet, amidst the splendours of eternity, forget the trials of time, or only remember them to bless the God who led thee through them, and wrought thy lasting good by them. Come, sing on thy bed! Rejoice amidst the flames! Make the wilderness blossom like the rose! Cause the desert to ring with thine exalting joys, for these light afflictions will soon be over, and then "for ever with the Lord," thy bliss shall never wane.

Thus, dear friends, Memory may be as Coleridge calls it, "the bosom-spring of joy," and when the Holy Spirit bends it to his service, it may be chief among earthly comforters.

**II.** For a short time, we will speak TO THE DOUBTING CHRISTIAN, WHO HAS LOST HIS EVIDENCES OF SALVATION.

It is our habit, in our ministry, to avoid extremes as much as possible, and to keep the narrow path of truth. We believe in the doctrine of predestination, we believe in the doctrine of free agency, and we follow the narrow path between those mountains. So in all other truths. We know some who think that doubts are not sins: we regret their thinking. We know others who believe doubts to be impossible where there is any faith, we cannot agree with them. We have heard of persons ridiculing that very sweet and admirable hymn, beginning

*“’Tis a point I long to know.”*

We dare not ridicule it ourselves, for we have often had to sing it—we wish it were not so, but we are compelled to confess that doubts have vexed us. The true position, with regard to the doubts and fears of believers, is just this—that they are sinful, and are not to be cultivated, but to be avoided; but that, more or less, the most of Christians do suffer them, and that they are no proof of a man’s being destitute of faith, for the very best of Christians have been subject to them. To you who are laboring under anxious thought I now address myself.

Let me bid you call to remembrance in the first place matters of the past. Shall I pause and let your heart talk to you? Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where Jesus first met with you? Perhaps you do not. Well, do you remember happy seasons when he has brought you to the banqueting house? Cannot you remember gracious deliverances? “I was brought low and he helped me? “Thou hast been my help.” When you were in those circumstances past, you thought yourselves in overwhelming trouble. You have passed through them, and cannot you find comfort in them? At the south of Africa the sea was generally so stormy, when the frail barks of the Portuguese went sailing south, that they named it the Cape of Storms; but after that cape had been well rounded by bolder navigators, they named it the Cape of Good Hope. In your experience you had many a Cape of Storms, but you have weathered them all, and now, let them be a Cape of Good Hope to you. Remember, “Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.” Say with David, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him.” Do I not remember this day some hill Mizars, whereon my soul has had such sweet fellowship with God, that she thought herself in heaven? Can I not remember moments of awful agony of soul, when in an instant my spirit leaped to the topmost heights of



ecstasy at the mention of my Savior's name? Have there not been times with me at the Lord's table, in private prayer, and in listening to his word, when I could say,

*“My willing soul would stay  
In such a frame as this,  
And sit and sing herself away,  
To everlasting bliss.”*

Well, let me call this to remembrance and have hope, for

*“Did Jesus once upon me shine,  
Then Jesus is for ever mine.*

He never loved where he afterwards hates; his will never changes. It is not possible that he who said, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands,” should ever forget or cast away those who once were dear to him.

Possibly, however, that may not be the means of comfort to some of you. Recall, I pray you, the fact that others have found the Lord true to them. They cried to God, and he delivered them. Do you not remember your mother? She is now in heaven, and you her son are toiling and struggling onward here below. Do not you recollect what she told you before she died? She said God had been faithful and true to her. She was left a widow, and you were but a child then, and she told you how God provided for her, and for you, and the rest of that little needy family, in answer to her pleadings. Do you believe your mother's testimony, and will you not rest with your mother's faith upon your mother's God. There are grey heads here who would, if it were the proper season, testify to you that in an experience of fifty and sixty years, in which they have walked before the Lord in the land of the living, they cannot put their finger upon any date and say, “Here God was unfaithful;” or, “Here he left me in the time of trouble.” I, who am but young have passed through many and sore tribulations after my sort, and can say and must say it, for if I speak not, the timbers of this house might cry out against my ungrateful silence; he is a faithful God, and he remembereth his servants, and leaveth them not in the hour of their trouble. Hearing our testimonies, cannot you say in the words of the text, “I recall this to mind, and therefore I have hope.”

Remember, again, and perhaps this may be consolatory to you, that though you think you are not a child of God at all now, yet if you look wit/tin you will see some faint traces of the holy Spirit's hand. The complete picture of

Christ is not there, but cannot you see the crayon sketch-the outline-the charcoal marks? "What," say you, "do you mean?" Do not you want to be a Christian? Have you not desires after God? Cannot you say with the Psalmist, "My heart and my flesh panteth after God-after the living God?" Oh, I have often had to console myself with this, when I could not see a single Christian grace beaming in my spirit, I have had to say, "I know I shall never be satisfied until I get to be like my Lord." One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see ;-see enough, at least, to know my own defects, and ciuptiness, and misery; and I have just enough spiritual life to feel that I want more, and that I cannot be satisfied unless I have more. Well, now, where God the Holy Ghost has done as much as that, he will do more. Where he begins the good work, we are told he will carry it on and perfect it in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Call that to mind, and you may have hope.

But I would remind you that there is a promise in this Book that exactly describes and suits your case. A young man had been left by his father heir of all his property, but an adversary disputed his right. The case was to come on in the court, and this young man, while he felt sure that he had a legal right to the whole, could not prove it. His legal adviser told him that there was more evidence wanted than he could bring. How to get this evidence he did not know. He went to an old chest where his father had been wont to keep his papers, turned all out, and as he turned the writings over, and over, and over, there was an old parchment. He undid the red tape with great anxiety, and there it was-the very thing he wanted-his father's will-in which the estate was spoken of as being left entirely to himself. He went into court boldly enough with that. Now, when we get into doubts, it is a good thing to turn to this old Book, and read until at last we can say, "That is it-that promise was made for me." Perhaps it may be this one: -"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them; I the God of Jacob will not forsake them." Or this one: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." May, I beg you to rummage the old Book through; and you, poor doubting, despairing Christian, will soon stumble on some precious parchment, as it were, which God the Holy Ghost will make to you the title-deed of immortality and life.

If these recollections should not suffice, I have one more. You look at me, and you open your ears to find what new thing I am going to tell you. No, I am going to tell you nothing new, but yet it is the best thing that was ever

said out of heaven, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." You have heard that a thousand times-and is the best music you have ever heard. If I am not a saint, I am a sinner; and if I may not go to the throne of grace as a child, I will go as a sinner. A certain king was accustomed on set occasions to entertain all the beggars of the city. Around him sat his courtiers, all clothed in rich apparel; the beggars sat at the same table in their rags of poverty. Now, it came to pass, that on a certain day, one of the courtiers had spoiled his silken apparel so that he dare not put it on, and he felt, "I cannot go to the king's feast to-day, for my robe is foul." He sat weeping, till the thought struck him, "To-morrow, when the king holds his feast, some will come as courtiers happily decked in their beautiful array; but others will come and be made quite as welcome who will be dressed in rags. Well, well," says he, "so long as I may see the king's face, and sit at the king's table, I will enter among the beggars." So, without mourning because he had lost his silken habit, he put on the rags of a beggar, and he saw the king's face as well as if he had worn his scarlet and fine linen. My soul has done this full many a time, and I bid you do the same; if you cannot come as a saint, come as a sinner, only do come, and you shall receive joy and peace. In a lamentable accident which occurred in the North, in one of the coal pits, when a considerable number of the miners were down below, the top of the pit fell in, and the shaft was completely blocked up. Those who were down below, sat together in the dark, and sang and prayed. They gathered to a spot where the last remains of air below could be breathed. There they sat and sang after the lights had gone out, because the air would not support the flame. They were in total darkness, but one of them said he had heard that there was a connection between that pit and an old pit that had been worked years ago. He said it was a low passage, through which a man might get by crawling all the way, lying flat upon the ground-he would go and see: the passage was very long, but they crept through it, and at last they came out to light at the bottom of the other pit and their lives were saved. If my present way to Christ as a saint gets blocked up, if I cannot go straight up the shaft and see the Light of my father up yonder, there is an old working, the old fashioned way by which sinners go, by which poor thieves go, by which harlots go-come, I will crawl along lowly and humbly, flat upon the ground-I will crawl along till I see my Father, and cry, "Father, I am not worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants, so long as I may but dwell in thy house." In your very worst case you can still come as sinners. Jesus "Christ

came into the world to save sinners,” call this to mind and you may have hope.”

### **III.** I must have a few words with SEEKERS.

Always in this Congregation we have some who are seeking the Lord—would to God we had many more! It were glorious preaching if all were either seeking or had found. If it were not for the mixed multitude who neither seek nor find our work were easy work indeed. Some of you are seeking God to-day and you are very much troubled with the fear that you cannot be saved. I will have a few words with you to recall to mind some common-place truths which may give hope.

First of all some of you are troubled about the doctrine of election. I cannot this morning explain it to you. I believe it and receive it with joy, and you may rest assured, however much it troubles you it is true. Though you may not like it, it is true, and remember it is not a matter of opinion as to what you like or do not like, as to what you think or do not think; you must turn to the Bible, and if you find it there you must believe it. Listen to me. You have got an idea that some persons will be sent to hell, merely and only because it is the will of God that they should be sent there. Throw the idea overboard, because it is a very wicked one, and is not to be found in Scripture. There could not be a hell inside the man’s conscience, who knew that he was wretched merely because God willed he should be, for the very essence of hell is sin, and a sense of having wilfully committed it. There could not be the flame of hell if there were not this conviction on the mind of the person suffering it, “I knew my duty but I did it not—I wilfully sinned against God and I am here, not because of anything He did or did not do, but because of my own sin.” If you drive that dark thought away you may be on the road to comfort. Remember again, that whatever the doctrine of election may be or may not be, there is a free invitation in the gospel given to needy sinners, “Whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely.” Now you may say, “I cannot reconcile the two.” There are a great many other things that you cannot do. God knows where these two things meet though you do not, and I hope you do not intend to wait till you are a philosopher before you will be saved, because it is likely enough that while you are trying to be wise by persistently remaining a practical fool you will find yourself in hell where your wisdom will not avail you. God commands you to trust Christ, and promises that all believers shall be saved. Leave your difficulties till you have trusted Christ, and then you will be in a

capacity to understand them better than you do now. In order to understand gospel doctrine you must believe in Christ first. What does Christ say, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Now election is the Father's work. The Father chooses sinners; Christ makes the atonement. You must go then to Christ the atoning sacrifice before you can understand the Father as the electing God. Do not persist in going to the Father first. Go to the Son as he tells you.

Once more recollect that even if your own idea of the doctrine of election were the truth, yet if it were so, you can but perish should you seek the Lord.

*"I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try;  
For if I stay away I know,  
I must for ever die.*

*But if I die with mercy sought,  
When I the king have tried,  
That were to die, delightful thought,  
As sinner never died."*

Trust Christ even if thou should perish, and thou shalt never perish if thou trustest in him.

Well, if that difficulty were removed, I can suppose another, saying, "Ah! but mine's a case of great sin." Recall this to mind and you will have hope, namely, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom," Paul says, "I am chief." "I am chief." Paul was the chief of sinners, and he went through the door of mercy; and now there can be none greater than the chief, where the chief went through you can go through; if the chief of sinners has been saved why not you? Why not you?

We heard Mr. Offord say the other day that he knew a good woman who, when the Salt-ash Bridge was made down at Plymouth, would not go on it. She said she did not believe it was safe. She saw locomotive engines and trains go over it so that the bridge sustained hundreds of tons at a time, but she shook her head and said she wondered people were so immensely presumptuous as to cross it. When the bridge was totally clear and not an engine on it she was asked if she would not walk on it then. Well, she did venture a little way, but she trembled all the while for fear her weight should make it fall. It could bear hundreds of tons of luggage, but it could

not bear her. You great sinner, it is much the same case with you. The stupendous bridge which Christ has flung across the wrath of God will bear the weight of your sin, for it has borne ten thousand across before, and will bear millions of sinners yet to the shore of their eternal rest. Call that to remembrance, and you may have hope.

“Yes,” says one, “but I believe I have committed the unpardonable sin.” My dear brother I believe you have not, but I want you to call one thing to remembrance, and that is that the unpardonable sin is a sin which is unto death. Now a sin which is unto death means a sin which brings death on the conscience. The man who commits it never has any conscience afterwards; he is dead there. Now, you have some feeling; you have enough life to wish to be saved from sin; you have enough life to long to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus. You have not committed the unpardonable sin, therefore have hope. “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” But, you reply, “Oh, I cannot repent, my heart is so hard.” Call to remembrance, that Jesus Christ is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins, and you may come to him to get repentance, and need not bring it to him. Come without any repentance and ask him to give it to you, and he will give it. Rest assured there is no fear whatever that if the soul seeks softness and tenderness it has that softness and tenderness in a measure even now, and will have it to the fullest extent ere long. “Oh, but,” you say, “I have a general unfitness and incapacity for being saved.” Then, dear friend, I want you to call this to remembrance, that Jesus Christ has a general fitness and a general capacity for saving sinners. I do not know what you want, but I do know Christ has it. I do not know the full of your disease, but I do know Christ is the physician who can meet it. I do not know how hard, and stubborn, and stolid, and ignorant, and blind, and dead your nature may be, but I do know that “Christ is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him.” What you are has nothing to do with the question, except that it is the mischief to be undone; the true answer to the question of how you are to be saved lies yonder in the bleeding body of the immaculate Lamb of God. Christ has all salvation in himself. He is Alpha, he is Omega. He does not begin to save and leave you to perish, nor does he offer to complete what you must first begin. He is the foundation as well as the pinnacle. He commences with you as the green blade, and he will finish with you as the full corn in the ear.

O that I had a voice like the trumpet of God that shall wake the dead at last! If I might only have it to utter one sentence, it would be this one, “In

Christ is your help found.” As for you, there never can be found anything hopeful in your human nature. It is death itself, it is rottenness and corruption. Turn, turn away your eyes from this despairing mass of black depravity, and look to Christ. He is the sacrifice for human guilt. His is the righteousness that covers men, and makes them acceptable before the Lord. Look to him as you are, black, foul, guilty, leprous, condemned. Go as you are. Trust Jesus Christ to save you, and remembering this, you shall have “a hope that maketh not ashamed,” which shall endure for ever.

I have labored to speak comfortable words, and words in season, and I have tried to speak them in homely language too. But, O thou Comforter, what can we do without thee? Thou must cheer our sadness. To comfort souls is God’s own work. Let us conclude, then, with the words of the Savior’s promise, “If I go away, I will send you another Comforter, who shall abide with you for ever;” and let our prayer be, that he would abide with us to his own glory, and to our comfort evermore. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-***  
***Lamentations 3:1-33.***

# THE GREAT ITINERANT.

NO. 655

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 22ND, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Who went about doing good.”-Acts 10:38.*

You will observe, if you read the chapter before us, that Peter’s sermon was short and much to the point. He preached Jesus Christ to Cornelius immediately and unmistakably. He gave a very admirable sketch of the life of Jesus, of which he affirmed himself to have been an eye-witness, and he brought forward in his closing sentence just that simple gospel which it is our joy to preach. “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” This should be an instructive example to all professed ministers of the gospel. We might say less about other matters without loss, if we would say more about the Lord Jesus. If we should omit some other teaching, if there were more of a savor of the name and of the person of Jesus Christ in our ministry, the omissions might be tolerated. It is a strange thing that men should profess to be sent of God, and yet talk about everything except the great message which they are sent to deliver. My errand as a minister is to preach Christ, and it will avail me little to have been clear and earnest upon other points, if I have neglected to set forth Christ crucified. To put my own views of doctrine or moral practice in the place of Jesus, is to put out the sun, and supply its place with a farthing rushlight; to take away the children’s bread, and offer them a stone. We commend Peter as an example to all who preach or teach, either in the street, the sick-chamber, or the house of prayer; do as Peter did; come at once to the soul of your ministry, and set forth Christ crucified in plain and simple language. If any should plead that the subject should be adapted to the audience, we see from the narrative that there is sure to be something in the history of Christ applicable to the case before us. Peter purposely gave prominence to



certain points in the history of the Master which would be most likely to enlist the sympathy of Cornelius. He says of him, "He is Lord of all ;" as much as to say, "He is not Lord of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, and therefore, O Cornelius, his dominion reaches to you. He is to be worshipped and adored, and he is to become a blessing, and a propitiatory sacrifice, not only to Israel's hosts, but even to the Italian band; and therefore thou, O Centurion, mayst take heart." Perhaps the words of our text were uttered by Peter concerning Christ because they also would be sure to attract the notice of a man who was "A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." He did as much as say, "Thou goest about doing good, Cornelius. It is the very soul of thy life to help the needy, to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked: Jesus also went about doing good in a higher sense, and I hold him up to thee as one to be beloved by every devout and generous heart."

Other points are to be noticed in Peter's address, which were evidently adapted to the case before him, but we have said enough. to prove that there is something in the story of Jesus suitable to win the attention, and to gain the heart of any congregation, large or small. Only let the Holy Spirit help us to dilate upon the gospel of the Lord Jesus, and we have no need to wander abroad for foreign themes; we can sit at the foot of the cross, and find a perpetually profitable subject there. No need to gather the sheaves of science, or the sweet flowers of poesy; Christ Jesus is both our science and our poetry, and as ministers we are complete in him. When we come forth to preach him, and to lift him up, we are armed from head to foot, and rich with weapons for our spiritual warfare; though learning and art have had no hand in fashioning our panoply, we need not fear that we shall meet a single foe who can withstand the terror of those celestial arms. God grant us grace in all our teachings to keep close to Jesus Christ, for his love is a theme most fit for all cases, and most sweet at all times.

The few words which we have taken for our text, are an exquisite miniature of the Lord Jesus Christ. "He went about doing good." There are not many touches, but they are the strokes of a master's pencil. The portrait cannot be mistaken for anyone else. The mightiest conquerors may gaze upon its beauties, but they cannot claim that it is intended to portray their lives. Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon-these went about conquering, burning, destroying, murdering; they went not about doing good. Prophets too, who professed to have been sent of God, have compassed sea and land

to make proselytes, but the good which they accomplished none could see. Mahomet's career was fraught with incalculable evil. The few good men and true who, like Howard, have perambulated the world, seeking to minister to the necessities of mankind, have wept over the heavenly portrait, and sighed that they are not more like it. This is what they sought to be, and so far as they copied this portrait, this is what they were; but they fall short of the original, and are not slow to confess their shortcomings. What Peter here draws in words, God's divine grace drew, in some measure, in lines of real life in the case of Howard and some other followers of Jesus of Nazareth; still, in the highest and fullest sense, these words are applicable to none but the Master, for his followers could not do such good as he achieved. His is the model, and theirs the humble copy; his the classic type, and theirs the modest imitation. He did good, and good only: but the best of men, being men at the best, sow mingled seed; and if they scatter handfuls of wheat, there is here and there a grain of darnel; however carefully they may select the grains, yet the cockle and the hemlock will fall from their hands as well as the good seed-corn of the kingdom. Of the Master, and only of the Master, it is true in the fullest, and the broadest, and most unguarded sense, "He went about doing good."

Two things this morning: first I shall want you, dear brethren, to consider him; and then, in the second place, to consider yourselves.

**I.** The first occupation will be pleasing, as well as profitable. Let us CONSIDER HIM.

**1.** Consider first, his object. He went about, but his travel was no listless motion, no purposeless wandering hither and thither—"He went about doing good." O man of God, have a purpose, and devote thy whole life to it! Be not an arrow shot at random, as in child's play, but choose thy target, and swift as the bullet whizzies to the mark, so fly thou onwards towards the great aim and object of thy life. Christ's object is described in these words, "doing good." Of this we may say, that this was his eternal purpose. Long before he took upon himself the nature of man, or even before man was formed of the dust of the earth, the heart of Jesus Christ was set upon doing good. In the eternal council in which the sacred Three entered into stipulations of gracious covenant, Christ Jesus became the Surety of that covenant in order that he might do good-good in the highest sense-good in snatching his people from the misery which sin would bring upon them, and good in manifesting the glorious attributes of God in a

splendor which could not otherwise have surrounded them. His delights of old were with the sons of men, because they afforded him an opportunity, such as he could find nowhere else, of doing good. He did good, it is true, among the angels, for the heavenly harps owe all their music to his presence. Among the devils there was no room for positive good; they were given over to evil; but even there restraining goodness found work for itself in binding them down in iron bands, lest their mischief should grow too rampant. On earth, however, was the widest scope and amplest room for goodness in its largest sense; not merely the goodness which restrains evil, and the goodness which rewards virtue, but that greater goodness which descends to ruined sin-stricken mortals, and lifts them up from the dunghill of their miserable degradation, to set them upon the throne of glory. It was the eternal purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ, before the lamps of heaven were kindled, or stars began to glitter in the vault of night, that he would do good.

This was his practical object, when he made his ever-memorable descent from the throne of his splendor to the manger of his poverty. Angels might well sing at Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," for Jesus Christ came not condemning the world, but doing good. His presence in the manger did good, as it cheered both rich magi and poor shepherd, both learned and illiterate, both Simeon and Anna, with the knowledge that God had come down to men. His childhood afterwards did good, for though it was so unobtrusive and obscure that a few words suffice to set it forth, yet he has become the very mirror of childhood's dutiful obedience to this day. Ye know how his after life was one practical carrying out of the solitary object which brought him from the throne of glory to the abodes of sinful men. He "went about doing good." Nor was this his purpose merely and the object of his errand, but his official prerogative. He received the name of Jesus at his birth, "For he shall save his people from their sins." He was named "Christ," because the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he was anointed to preach good tidings to the meek, and to open the prisons to them that were bound. Jesus Christ is the title which bespeaks one whose office it is to do good. Mention any name you please which belongs to the Savior, and you will see that it is incumbent upon him, *ex officio*, to go about doing good. Is he a Shepherd? he must do good to his sheep. Is he a Husband? he must love his Church and give himself for her, that he may cleanse and perfect her. Is he a Friend? he "sticketh closer than a brother" and doeth good. Is he "the

Lion of the tribe of Judah?" it is not to do damage or mischief to innocence and weakness, but that, strong as a lion when he tears his prey, he may rend in pieces the foe of truth and goodness. Is he a Lamb? herein his goodness shows itself most completely, for he lays down his life that his Israel may go free when the destroying angel smites Egypt. Everywhere it was his peculiar prerogative and his special business to go about doing good. But more, it was not only his intention and the object of his errand, and his prerogative, but his actual performance. He did good in all senses. Jesus Christ wrought physical benefit among the sons of men. How many blind eyes first saw the light through the touch of his finger! How many silent ears heard the charming voice of affection after he had said "Be open"! Even the gates of death were no barrier to the errands of his goodness; the widow at the gate of Nain felt her heart leap within her for joy when her son was restored; and Mary and Martha were glad when Lazarus came forth from his grave. He did good physically. We have thought that our Lord did this not merely to show his power and universality of his benevolence, and to teach spiritual truth by acted parables, but also to say to us in these days, "Followers of Jesus, do good in all sorts of ways. You may think it to be your special calling to feed souls, but remember that your Master broke loaves and fishes to hungry bodies. You may deem it your chief object to instruct the ignorant, but remember that he healed the sick. You may make it your chief joy to pray for the healing of sick spirits, but remember that he rescued many bodies from incurable disease." As much as lieth in us let us do good unto all men, and good of all sorts too; though it be specially to the household of faith, and specially in a spiritual sense. Let no act of mercy seem beneath him who is a follower of the man that went about doing good. There is a spirit springing up among us which is very dangerous, though it wears the garb of excessive spirituality. It is unpractical and unchristlike- a spirit which talks in this fashion-" The sons of men tried to improve the world and make it better; but as for Enoch, the man of God, he knew that the world was so bad that it was of no avail to attempt to better it, and therefore he left it alone, and walked with God." It may be well, they say, for such carnal-minded Christians as some of us, to try and improve society and to give a better tone to morals; but these dear spiritual brethren are so taken up with divine things, and so assured that the mission is of a supercelestial character, that they will have nothing to do with blessing mankind, being quite sufficiently occupied with blessing themselves and one another. I pray God that we may never fall into the unpractical speculations and

separations of certain brethren whose superior sanctity they must allow us to suspect. The large-heartedness of the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the most glorious traits in his character. He scattered good of all sorts on all sides. Let us, if we profess to be his followers, never be straitened even by pretended spirituality. Do good "as much as lieth in you," to the utmost extent of your power, and let that be of every sort. It strikes me that the Lord Jesus also did much moral good. Where he did not save spiritually, yet he elevated. I am not sure that that poor adultress was ever truly converted, and yet I know that he said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more;" and I can well believe that in this respect, at least, she would sin no more. I do not know that the Pharisees ever became followers of the man of Nazareth; and yet I cannot conceive that they could have listened to his stern rebukes against their hypocrisy without being in some measure humbled if not enlightened. Or if they were not better, at any rate, their professions would not be so readily allowed; society would receive, as it were, a tonic from those sharp and bitter words of the Master, and become too strong and masculine to receive any longer the lofty boastings of those mere pretenders. Jesus Christ, when he sat down on the mount, did not deliver a spiritual sermon of the style commonly classed under that head. That sermon on the mount is for the most part morality-good high, heavenly morality, higher than any teacher ever reached before; but there is very little in it about justification by faith, or concerning atonement, very little about the doctrine of election, the work of the Holy Spirit, or final perseverance. The fact is the Master was doing moral as well as spiritual good; and coming among a degraded people who had set darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, he thought it a part of his vocation to preach to them truth on that subject as well as upon the higher themes concerning his advent, and his salvation. Dear friends, this admonishes us to seek the moral good of the people among whom we dwell. The Christian minister must not lay aside his ministry to become the mere moralist lecturer, but he may and should lecture upon morals, and he can say some things in lectures which he could not say in sermons. Let him by all means occasionally leave the pulpit for the platform, if he can do service to society; let him do good in every possible shape and way. I trow that it is the Christian minister's place not simply to preach the high and glorious doctrine of the cross, but also to deal with the current sins of mankind as did the prophets of old, and to inculcate those virtues most needed in the state, as did men God sent in the ages which are past. Jesus Christ went about doing good, we say, of a

moral kind as well as of a spiritual order, but still the Savior's great good was spiritual. This was the great end that he was driving at—the bringing out of a people prepared to receive himself and his salvation. He came preaching grace and peace. His great object was the spiritual emancipation of the bondaged souls of men. Beloved, how he sought after this! What tears and cries went up to God from the mountain's bleak summit! With what earnest intercession did he plead with men when he addressed them concerning repentance and faith! "Woe unto thee Bethsaida! woe unto thee Chorazin!" were not words spoken by one who had a tearless eye. "Woe unto thee Capernaum!" was not the desolating curse of one who had a hard unsympathetic heart. The Savior, when he wept over Jerusalem, was only doing once before men what he did all his life before God. He wept over sinners he longed for their salvation. "Never man spake like that man," for having the highest truth he spake it after the highest fashion. Never the ostentation of eloquence, never the affectation of oratory, but ever the earnest, still, small pleading voice which "doth not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." He went about in his daily preaching instructing the people because he found them as sheep without a shepherd, and therefore "he taught them many things." Physical, moral, spiritual good, good of all sorts the Savior did—and while I close this point as to his object of life, let me say that he did something more than all this: he wrought enduring good which abides with us now. The good that holy men do is imperishable. The Scripture saith, "Their works do follow them," but not to the grave—upward their works ascend. If our works followed our bodies, they would rot in the tomb; but they follow our souls, and therefore mount up to immortality. Look ye upon the world now and see whether Jesus Christ is not still in spirit going about doing good. He has gone up to glory, but the spirit of his life and of his teaching is still among us. And what is his religion doing? Ask ye of our sires and they will tell you how this land was translated from a region of savages into the abode of peace and joy. Look ye yourselves in your own day to the far off islands of the south, and see how they have been transformed from dens of the wild blood-loving cannibals, into abodes of civilized men. Jesus Christ's gospel flies like an angel through the midst of heaven, proclaiming good news to men; and wherever its foot rests but for an hour, it transforms the desert into an Eden, and makes the wilderness blossom as the rose. May the Savior help us so to live, that when we die we may have sown some seeds which shall blossom over our tomb.

Thus we have given an outline of the Savior's doing good. May we add this sentence as a comfort to any here who are seeking Jesus. If it were his eternal purpose and his life's mission to do good, and he went about to find out the objects of it, why should he not do good to you? If he healed the blind, if he gave spiritual sight, why should he not give it to you? O may the desire be breathed by thee, poor seeking soul, breathed solemnly but hopefully to him—"O thou who in the days of thy flesh didst take pity upon misery and wretchedness in every shape, take pity upon me! Save me with thy great salvation!" Rest assured, beloved hearer, that prayer should not go up to heaven in vain. His ear is open still to hear the plaint of woe, and his hand is ready still to giving the healing touch, and the voice to say, "I will, be thou clean." May he do good in you this morning.

**2.** A short time may be profitably spent in considering the mode in which this object was compassed. We are told that he "went about doing good," which seems to suggest several points. First of all he did the good personally. He "went about doing good." He might, if he had chosen, have selected his place, and having seated himself, he might have sent out his apostles as ambassadors to do good in his stead; but you will recollect that when he sent them out, it was not that they might be proxies, but that they might be heralds; he sent them two and two unto every place whither he himself would come. They were to be to him what John the Baptist had been at his first coming. Jesus Christ entered the field of labor in person. It is remarkable how the evangelists constantly tell us that he touched the leper with his own finger, that he visited the bedside of those sick with fever, and in cases where he was asked to speak the word only at a distance, he did not usually comply with such a request, but went himself to the sick bed, and there personally wrought the cure. A lesson to us if we would do good well, to do it ourselves. There are some things which we cannot do ourselves. We cannot remain among our families in England for instance, and preach the gospel in Hindostan. We cannot be engaged this morning in listening to the Word, and at the same time visiting the lodging-house or den of iniquity in some back street. There are some works of mercy which are best performed by others, but we can make these more personal by looking after the worker and taking a deeper interest in him, and by attending him with our prayers. I would that much more of benevolence were performed by men themselves. I do not care to speak against societies, but it is such an odd thing that if I have twenty-one shillings to give away, I cannot give them to a deserving family myself, but

I must make it into about fifteen shillings before it goes at all, by paying it into a royal something or other society, and then it proceeds by a roundabout method, and at last is delivered to the poor by a mere hand without a soul, and is received by the poor, not as a gift of charity, but rather as a contribution from an unknown something with a secretary, which needs a place in which to drop its funds. Why should you not go and give away the twenty-one shillings yourself, lovingly and tenderly? It will be better than letting somebody else pare it down to fifteen, and give it away coldly and officially. So much depends upon the way of doing good. The look, the word, the prayer, the tear, will often be more valuable to the widow than that half-crown which you have given her. I heard a poor person once say, "Sir, I went to So-and-so for help, and he refused me; but I would sooner be refused by him than I would have money given to me by So-and-so," mentioning another who gave it with a sort of, "Well, you know I do not approve of giving anything to such as you are, but there it is-you must have it I suppose, so be off with you." Give your alms away yourselves, and you will learn by so doing, it will enable you to exercise Christian virtues. You will win a joy which it were not worth while to lose, and you will confer, in addition to the benevolence that you bestow, a blessing which cannot be conferred by the person who is your substitute. He went about doing good. He did it himself Oh! some of you, preach yourselves, I pray you! Talk to the Sunday-school children yourselves! Give away tracts-that is well enough if you cannot speak-but do try and talk yourselves. The influence of that hand laid upon your friend's shoulder, that eye of yours looking into his eye as you say, "Friend, I wish you were converted, my soul longs for your salvation;" there is more in that influence than in a whole library of tracts. Seek souls yourselves. Fish with your own hooks; you cannot help being successful if you imitate your Master, and yourselves do good in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Savior not only "went about doing good" personally, but his very presence did good. The presence of the Savior is in itself a good, apart from the blessings which he bestowed. At the sight of him courage revived, drooping faith grew strong, hope brushed a tear from her eye and smiled. The sight of Jesus Christ as once it calmed the waves and hushed the winds, did so a thousand times in men souls. Even devils, when they saw him, cried out and trembled. Sinners wept at the sight of his pitying goodness. The woman who brake the alabaster box of precious ointment, felt that the only fit place to break it was near to him. His presence made



her sacred action yet more sweet. What cannot men do when Christ is there? And, O beloved, if we be anything like our Master, our presence will be of some value. There are some of my brethren, when I see them I feel strong. You go into a little prayer-meeting, and numbers are not there; but such a saint is there, and you feel, "Well, if he be there, there is a prayermeeting at once." You have work to do; it is very hard and toilsome, and you cannot prosper in it; but a brother drops into your little Sunday-school, or into your class, and looks at it, and you feel, "Well, if I have that man's sympathy, I can go on again." Therefore be careful to give your presence as much as you can to every good work, and do not isolate yourself from those actually engaged in labors of love.

Does not our Lord's going about doing good set forth his incessant activity? He did not only the good which was round about him, which came close to hand—he did not only the good which was brought to him, as when men were brought on their beds, and laid at his feet, but he "went about." He could not be satisfied to be still. Throughout the whole land of Judea, from Dan to Beersheba, he trod its weary acres. Scarcely a village or a hamlet which had not been gladdened by the sight of him. Even Jericho, accursed of old, had been blessed by his presence, and a great sinner had been made a great saint. Everywhere he went casting salt into the bitter waters, and sowing with sunshine the abodes of sadness. He was ever active in God's service, Oh! the creeping, crawling manner in which some people serve the Lord. The very way in which some people mumble through religious exercises, is enough to make one sick at heart, to think that the solemn offices of religion should be entrusted to such inanimate beings. If God of old said of Laodicea, that he would spew that Church out of his mouth, what will he do with those professors in modern times, who are the very pink of propriety, but who were never touched with fire from heaven, and know not what the word "zeal" means? Our Master was here, and there, and everywhere. Let us gird up the loins of our mind, and be not weary in well doing; but be "stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Does not the text also imply that Jesus Christ went out of his way to do good? "He went about doing good." There were short cuts which he would not take, because there were persons dwelling in the roundabout way who must be met with. "He must needs go through Samaria." It is said that that city lay in the straightest way to Jerusalem. So it was, but it was not the right way, because the Samaritans so hated those whose faces were

towards Jerusalem, that they maltreated them whenever they could. Yet the Master did not care for perils of waylaying enemies. He did not select the smoothest or the safest road, but he selected that in which there was a woman to whom he could do good. He sits down on the well. I wot it was not merely weariness that made him sit there; and when he said, "I thirst: give me to drink," it was not merely that he was thirsty; he had another weariness-he was patient over that woman's sin, and longed to reveal himself to her: he had another thirst-he did not mean merely "Give me water out of that well;" when he said, "Give me to drink," he meant "Give me your heart's love, my soul pants for it; I want to see you- a poor adulterous sinner-saved from sin." How else do we understand the words which he said to his disciples, when they wondered that he spoke with the woman? He said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of, for it is my meat and my drink to do the will of him that sent me." He had received meat and drink in seeing that woman leave her water-pot, and go away to tell her fellow-sinners, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" He went round about after the objects of his gracious desires. So must the Christian. You must not be content to do good in the regular circle of your movements: that is so far so well, but go beyond your old line. Break through the bounds of propriety every now and then, and do an odd thing. I do believe that sometimes these odd expedients achieve more than regular methods. That was a quaint expedient of those who brake up the roof to let down a palsied man that Jesus might heal him. There has been a good deal said about that roof. According to some people it was not a roof at all but a sort of awning, but this morning we will stick to our old version that which tells us "they brake up the tiling," this must have made it a very bad look-out of those down below; but I dare say those up top argued-" Well, the Savior is there, and if anybody shall be hurt by a tile or two he can easily heal them. Anyhow we will get this man before him, for this is the case in which we feel most concerned." Ah! dear friends, many people are so particular about making a little dust or breaking up a few tiles, but our mind is, never care about that, there will be time to clean the repair after souls are saved, and for so great an end as salvation we may neglect some few niceties and punctios, and be most of all vehemently desirous that we may do good.

We have not quite done with the text yet. It means too that Jesus Christ went far in doing good. The district of Palestine was not very large, but you will observe that he went to the limit of it. He was as it were the

bishop of the Holy Land and he never went out of the diocese, for he said he was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, But he went to the verge of it. He went to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. If he might not go over the mark yet he will go up to the edge; so if there should happen to be any limit to your doing good in any particular place at least go to the end of the limit. However, I rather like Rowland Hill's thought: when he was blamed for preaching out of his parish he claimed that he never did so, for the whole world was his parish. Make the world the sphere of your occupations, according to the parable "the field is the world." I admire the Lord's going about not simply for the miles he traveled, but for the space of character over which he passed. He "went about." It is nothing wonderful that he went as far as Tyre and Sidon, but it is much that he went as far as publicans and sinners. I do not wonder that he went from Dan to Beersheba, but I have wondered often that he went so far as to save harlots by his grace. We may in this sense go about doing good without travelling across the sea. A minister once announced to his congregation one Sunday morning, "I am going on a mission to the heathen." Now he had not told his deacons about it, and they looked at one another. The good people in the congregation some of them began to take out their pocket handkerchiefs; they thought their minister was going to leave them—he was so useful and necessary to them that they felt sad at the bare idea of loosing him. "But" he added, "I shall not be out of town." So you may go on a mission to the heathen without going out of this huge town of ours. You might almost preach to every sort of literal heathen within the bounds of London; to Parthians, Medes, and Elamites and the dwellers of Mesopotamia. There are men of every color, speaking every language under heaven, now living in London; and if you want to convert Mahometans, Turks, Chinese, men from Bengal, Java, or Borneo, you may find them all here. There are always representatives of every nation close at our door. If you want men who have gone far in sin, great foreigners in that respect, you need not certainly leave London for that; you shall find men and women rotten with sin, and reeking in the nostrils of God with their abominations. You may go about doing good, and your railway ticket need not cost you one farthing. No doubt Christ's perseverance is intended in our text, for when rejected in one place, he goes to another. If one will not hear, another will. The unity of his purpose is also hinted at. He does not go about with two aims, but this one absorbs all his heart—"doing good." And the success, too, of his purpose is here intended. He went

about, and not only tried to do good, but he did it; he left the world better than he found, it when he ascended to his Father God.

**3.** One moment concerning the motive of Christ's doing good. It is not far to seek. He did good partly because he could not help it. It was his nature to do good. He was all goodness, and as the clouds which are full of rain empty themselves upon the earth, even so must he. You will have observed that all the good things which God has made are diffusive. There is light; you cannot confine light within narrow limits. Suppose we were to grow so bigoted and conceited as to conceive that we had all the light in the world inside this Tabernacle. We might have iron shutters made to keep the light in, yet it is very probable that the light would not agree with our bigotry, but would not come in at all, but leave us in the dark for wanting to confine it. With splendid mirrors, Turkey carpets, jewellery, fine pictures, rare statuary, you may court the light to come into palatial halls, it comes, it is true, but as it enters it whispers, "And I passed through the iron grating of a prison, just now. I shone upon the poor cottager beneath the rude thatched roof, I streamed through the window out of which half the glass was gone, and gleamed as cheerily and willingly upon the rags of poverty as in these marble halls." You cannot clip the wings of the morning, or monopolize the golden rays of the sun. What a space the light has traversed doing good. Millions of miles it has come streaming from the sun, and yet further from yonder fixed star. O light! why couldst thou not be contented with thine own sphere, why journey so far from home? Missionary rays come to us from so vast a distance that they must have been hundreds of years in reaching us, and yet their mission is not over, for they flash on to yet remoter worlds. So with the air; as far as the world is concerned, the air will throw itself down the shaft of the deepest coal pit, climb the loftiest Alp, and although men madly strive to shut it out, it will thrust itself into the fever lair and cool the brow of cholera. So with water. Here it comes dropping from every inch of the cloudy sky, flooding the streets, flushing the foul sewers, and soaking into the dry soil. Everywhere it will come, for water claims to have its influence everywhere felt. Fire, too, who can bind its giant hands? The king cannot claim it as a royal perquisite. Among those few sticks which the widow woman with the red cloak has been gathering in the wood, it burns as readily as in Her Majesty's palace. It is the nature of Jesus to diffuse himself; it is his life to do good. His grand motive no doubt is the display of the glorious attributes of God. He went about doing good in order that Jehovah might be revealed

in his splendor to the eyes of adoring men. He is the manifestation of Godhead; he is the express image of his Father's person, "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," and through heaven, and earth, and sky, and sun, and stars, all show forth something of the goodness of God, yet the life of Jesus is the fullest and clearest manifestation of the beneficence of deity that ever will be accorded to the sons of men. This is an object worthy of God, to manifest himself, and such an object Christ set before him when he came to do good among the sons of men.

I have not said enough about the Savior, but still as much as time allows us, and I will close that point with this one thing: if Jesus Christ went about doing good, and if his motive was simply God's glory, poor troubled sinner, cannot he glorify God in you? You need pardon: you will be an illustrious instance of God's grace if he should ever save you. Have hope. If Jesus Christ goes about, you are not too far off. If he looks upon the most forlorn, you are not in too desperate a plight. Cry to him when your spirit is overwhelmed, yet look to the rock that is higher than you. "From the ends of the earth have I cried unto thee, O God, and thou heardest me." May it be your joy to-day to find him your friend, who "went about doing good."

**II.** We were in the second place to CONSIDER OURSELVES. This is the application of the subject.

Consider ourselves then as to the past, with sorrow and shamefacedness. Have we gone about doing good? I fear me there are some here who never did any spiritual good. The tree is corrupt, and it cannot bring forth good fruit. The fountain is bitter, and it cannot yield sweet water. Ye must be born again before you can go about doing good. While your nature is as father Adam left it, good cannot come from you. "There .is none that doeth good, no not one." How clearly this is true in some persons, as proved by their very profession. The profession of some men is one in which they cannot hope to do good. There are some in all callings who either do positive harm, or at any rate cannot imagine that they are doing any good. Let them repent themselves. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." God grant that neither our character nor our vocation may stand in the way of our doing good. But you who have new hearts and rights spirits, and are saved by faith in the precious blood of Jesus, have you done all the good you could? I dare not say yes-I wish I dare. No, Master, there must have been many times when I might

have served thee when I have not done it. I have been an unprofitable servant. I have not done what was my duty to have done. Ah! some of you have missed a world of joy in having done so little good. Ye have not given, therefore you are not increased. You never gave to others much, and so they have not given back to you full measure, pressed down and running over. You have not borne the burdens of others, and so your own burden has become heavy and intolerable. Christians, in looking back upon the past, must you not drop tears of regret, and do you not bless that preserving love which still follows you-yea, which will never let you go, but despite your barrenness and unfruitfulness, will not cease to work upon you till it has made you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who day without night serve God in his temple?

As to the future. The old question comes up, if any man says today, "I am resolved to go about doing good" -is he able to do it? And again, the reply comes, we must first be good, or else we cannot do good. The only way to be good is to seek to the good One, the good Master. If thou hast a new heart and a right spirit, then go thy way and serve him; but if not, pause awhile. Unto the wicked God saith, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" He will have clean-handed men to do his work. Wash first in the brazen laver if thou wouldst be a priest. God will not have men for his servants who would defile the sacred place. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." God give us to rest implicitly upon the Lord Jesus Christ by a living faith, and so to be cleansed in his precious blood, and then we may resolve to go forth and live for Him. Have we any work to do now that we can set about at once? If we have, whatsoever our hand findeth to do, let us do it. Let us not be asking for greater abilities than we have. If we can get them, let us do so; but meanwhile let us use what we have. Go, thou housewife, to thy house, and from the lowest chamber to the top go thou about doing good: here is range enough for thee. Go, thou teacher, to thy little school, and among those boys or girls, let thine example tell, and there is range enough for thee. Go, thou worker, to thy shop, and amongst thy fellow-workmen, let fall here and there a word for Christ; above all, let thine example shine, and there is work for thee. You domestic servants, the kitchen is sphere enough for you. You shall go about doing good from the dresser to the fireplace, and you shall have width enough and verge enough to make it a kingdom consecrated to God. Without leaving your position any one of you, without giving up the plough, or the cobbler's lapstone, or the needle, or the plane, or the saw,

without leaving business-without any of you good sisters wanting to be nuns, or any of us putting on the serge and becoming monks- in our own calling let us go about doing good. The best preparation for it will be, renew your dedication to Christ, be much in earnest prayer, seek the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, and then go forth in your Master's strength with this as your resolve-that as portraits of Jesus Christ it shall be said of you, "He went about doing good." May God add his blessing for the Savior's sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON -Acts 10.***

# PREVENIENT GRACE.

NO. 656

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me.”-Galatians 1:15.*

You all know the story of the apostle Paul; he had been a persecutor, and went armed with letters to Damascus, to hail men and women, and drag them to prison. On the road thither he saw a light exceeding bright above the brightness of the sun, and a voice spake out of heaven to him saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” By this miraculous interposition he was converted: three days he spent in darkness; but when Ananias came to tell him of the gospel of Jesus Christ, there fell from his eyes as it were scales. He was baptized, became the most mighty of all Christian teachers, and could truly say that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles.”

Paul’s conversion is generally considered so very remarkable for its suddenness and distinctness, and truly it is; yet, at the same time, it is no exception to the general rule of conversions, but is rather a type, or model, or pattern of the way in which God shows forth his longsuffering to them that are led to believe on him. It appears from my text, however, that there is another part of Paul’s history which deserves our attention quite as much as the suddenness of his conversion, namely, the fact that although he was suddenly converted, yet God had had thoughts of mercy towards him from his very birth. God did not begin to work with him when he was on the road to Damascus. That was not the first occasion on which eyes of love had darted upon this chief of sinners, but he declares that God had separated him and set him apart even from his mother’s womb, that he might by-and-by be called by grace, and have Jesus Christ revealed in him.

I selected this text, not so much for its own sake, as to give me an opportunity for saying a little this evening upon a doctrine not often



touched upon, namely, that of PREVENIENT GRACE, or the grace which comes before regeneration and conversion. I think we sometimes overlook it. We do not attach enough importance to the grace of God in its dealings with men before he actually brings them to himself. Paul says that God had designs of love towards him even before he had called him out of the dead world into spiritual life.

**I.** To begin, then, let us talk for a little while upon THE PURPOSE OF GOD PRECEDING SAVING GRACE, AS IT MAY CLEARLY BE SEEN DEVELOPING ITSELF IN HUMAN HISTORY.

You generally judge what a man's purpose is by his actions. If you saw a man very care fully making moulds in sand, if you then watched him take several pieces of iron and melt them down, and if you further noticed him running the melted iron into the moulds, you might not know precisely what class of machine he was making, but you would very justly conclude that he was making some part of an engine or other machinery—a beam, or a lever, or a crank, or a wheel, and according to what you saw the moulds in the sand to be, you would form your idea of what the man was intending to make. Now, when I look at the life of a man, even before conversion, I think I can discover something of God's moulding and fashioning in him even before regenerating grace comes into his heart. Let me give you an illustration of my course of thought. When God created man—we are told in the hook of Genesis—he made him “out of the dust of the earth.” Mark him beneath his Maker's hand, the framework of a man, the tabernacle for an immortal soul; a man made of clay, fully made, I suppose, and perfect in all respects excepting one, and that soon followed: for after God had formed him out of the dust, then he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Now it strikes me that during the early part of the history of the people whom God means to save, though they have not received into their hearts any spiritual life, nor experienced any of the work of regeneration, yet their life before conversion is really a working of them in the clay.

Let us endeavor to bring this out more distinctly. Can you not perceive God's purpose in the apostle Paul, when you think of the singular gifts with which he was endowed? Here was a man, a rhetorician, so noble that there are in his works passages of eloquence not to be equalled, much less excelled, by Demosthenes and Cicero. As a logician, his arguments are most conclusive as well as profound. Never had man such an eagle-eye to

pierce into the depths of a matter; never had man such an eagle-wing to mount up into its sublimities. He argues out questions so abstruse, that at all times they have been the battle-grounds of controversies, and yet he seems to perceive them clearly and distinctly and to unfold and expound them with a precision of language not to be misunderstood. All apostles of Jesus Christ put together are not equal to Paul in the way of teaching. Truly he might have said of them all, "You are but as children compared with me." Peter dashes, and dashes gloriously, against the adversary, but Peter cannot build up, nor instruct; like the great apostle of the Gentiles, he has to say himself of Paul's writings that they "contain some things hard to be understood." Peter can confirm, but scarcely can he understand Paul; for where intellect is concerned, Paul is far, far above him. Paul seems to have been endowed by God with one of the most massive brains that ever filled human cranium, and to have been gifted with an intellect which towered far above anything that we find elsewhere. Had Paul been merely a natural man, I do not doubt but what he would take the place either of Milton among the poets, or of Bacon among the philosophers.

He was, in deed and in truth, a master-mind. Now, when I see such a man as this cast by God in the mould of nature, I ask myself- "What is God about? What is he doing here?" As every man has a purpose, so also has God, and I think I see in all this that God foreknew that such a man was necessary to be raised up as a vessel through whom he might convey to the world the hidden treasures of the gospel; that such a man was needful so that God might speak his great things by him. You will say, probably, that God reveals great things by fools. I beg your pardon. God did once permit an ass to speak, but it was a very small thing that he said, for any ass might readily have said it. Whenever there is a wise thing to be said, a wise man is always chosen to say it. Look the whole Bible through, and you will find that the revelation is always congruous to the person to whom it is given. You do not find Ezekiel blessed with a revelation like that of Isaiah. Ezekiel is all imagination, therefore he must soar on the eagle's wing; Isaiah is all affection and boldness, and therefore he must speak with evangelical fullness. God does not give Nahum's revelation to the herdsman Amos: the herdsman Amos cannot speak like Nahum, nor can Nahum speak like Amos. Each man is after his own order, and a man of this masterly order of mind, like the apostle Paul, must have been created, it seems to me, for no other end than to be the appropriate means of revealing to us the fullness and the blessing of the gospel of peace.

Mark, again, the apostle's education. Paul was a Jew, not half Greek and half Jew, but a pure Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, speaking still the Jews' native tongue, and not a stranger to the ancient speech of Israel. There was nothing in the traditions of the Jews which Paul did not know and understand. He was educated at the feet of Gamaliel. The best master of the age is selected to be the master of the hopeful young scholar, and the school in which he is placed must be a Rabbinical one. Now, just observe in this the purpose of God. Paul's life-long struggle was to be with Jewish superstition. In Iconium, in Lystra, in Derbe, in Athens, in Corinth, in Rome, he must always be confronting the Judaizing spirit; and it was well that he should know all about it that he should be well schooled in it; and it does strike me that God separated him from his mother's womb on purpose that he might go forth to proclaim the gospel instead of law, and shut the mouths of those who were constantly abiding by the traditions of the fathers, instead of the gospel of Jesus Christ. All this, remember, was going on while as yet he was unconverted, though he was even then, as we see, being prepared for his work.

Then observe, the spiritual struggles through which Paul passed. I take it that mental struggles are often a more important part of education than what a man learns from his school-master. What is learned here in my heart is often of more use to me than what can be put into my head by another. Paul seems to have had a mind bent upon carrying out what he believed to be right. To serve God appears to have been the great ambition, the one object of the apostle's life. Even when he was a persecutor, he says he thought he was doing God service. He was no groveller after wealth; never in his whole lifetime was Paul a Mainmonite. He was no mere seeker after learning-never; he was learned, but it was all held and used subject to what he deemed far more highly, the indwelling grace of God. Even before he knew Christ he had a sort of religion, and an attachment, and an earnest attachment too, to the God of his fathers, though it was a zeal not according to knowledge. He had his inward fightings, and fears, and struggles, and difficulties, and all these were educating him to come out and talk to his fellow-sinners, and lead them up out of the darkness of Judaism into the light of Christianity.

And then, what I like in Paul, and that which leads me to see the purpose of God in him, is the singular formation of his mind. Even as a sinner, Paul was great. He was "the chief of sinners," just as he afterwards became, "not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles." There are some of us

who are such little men that the world will never see US; the old proverb about the chips in porridge giving one pleasure either way, might apply to a great many people, but never to Paul. If there was anything to be done, Paul would do it; ay, and if it came to the stoning of Stephen, he says he gave his vote against him, and though he was not one of the actual executioners, yet we are told that "the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." He would do all that was to be done, and was a thoroughgoing man everywhere. Believing a thing to be right, Paul never consulted with flesh and blood, but girded up his loins and wrought with the whole powers of his being, and that was no mean force, as his enemies felt to their cost. Why, as I see him riding to Damascus, I picture him with his eyes flashing with fanatic hate against the disciples of the man whom he thought to be an impostor, while his heart beat high with the determination to crush the followers, of the Nazarene. He is a man all energy, and all determination, and when he is converted, he is only lifted into a higher life, but unchanged as to temperament, nature, and force of character. He seems to have been constituted naturally a thorough-going, thorough-hearted man, in order that when grace did come to him, he might be just as earnest, just as dauntless, and fearless, in the defense of what he believed to be right. Yes, and such a man was wanted to lead the vanguard in the great crusade against the God of this world. No other could have stood forward thus as Paul did, for no other had the same firmness, boldness, and decision, that he possessed. "But," I hear someone say, "was not Peter as bold?" Yes, he was; but Peter, you remember, always had the failing of being just where he ought not to be when he was wanted. Peter was unstable to the very last, I think; certainly in Paul's day, Paul had to withstand him. He was a great and good man, but not fitted to be the foremost. Perhaps you say, "But there is John: would not John do?" No; we cannot speak in too high terms of John, but John is too full of affection. John is the plane to smooth the timber, but not the axe to cut it down. John is too gentle, too meek; he is the Phillip Melancthon, but Paul must be the Luther and Calvin rolled into one. Such a man was wanted, and I say, that from his very birth, God was fitting him for this position; and before he was converted, prevenient grace was thus engaged, fashioning, moulding, and preparing the man, in order that by-and-by there might be put into his nostrils the breath of life.

Now what is the drift of all this? A practical one; and to show you what it is, we will stay a minute here before we go on to anything else. Some of

the good fathers amongst us are mourning very bitterly just now over their sons. Your children do not turn out as you wish they would; they are getting sceptical some of them, and they are also falling into sin. Well, dear friends, it is yours to mourn; it is enough to make you weep bitterly; but let me whisper a word into your ear. Do not sorrow as those who are without hope, for God may have very great designs to be answered, even by these very young men who seem to be running so altogether in the wrong direction. I do not think I could go so far as John Bunyan did, when he said he was sure God would have some eminent saints in the next generation, because the young men in his day were such gross sinners, that he thought they would make fine saints; and when the Lord came and saved them by his mercy, they would love him much, because they had had so much forgiven. I would hardly like to say so much as that, but I do believe that sometimes in the inscrutable wisdom of God, when some of those who have been sceptical come to see the truth, they are the very best men that could possibly be found to do battle against the enemy. Some of those who have fallen into error, after having passed through it and happily come up through its deep ditch, are just the men to stand and warn others against it. I cannot conceive that Luther would ever have been so mighty a preacher of the faith if he had not himself struggled up and down Pilate's staircase on his knees, when trying to get to heaven by his penances and his good works. O let us have hope. We do not know but that God may be intending yet to call them and bless them. Who can tell, there may be a young man here to night who will one day be the herald of the cross in China, in Hindostan, in Africa, and in the islands of the sea? Remember John Williams wishing to keep an appointment with another young man who committed a certain sin. He wanted to know what time it was, and so just stepped into Moorfield's Chapel; someone saw him, and he did not like to go out, and the word, preached by Mr. Timothy East, who still survives amongst us, fell on his ears, and the young sinner was made a saint; and you all know how he afterwards perished as a martyr on the shores of Erromanga. Why may there not be another such a case to night? There may be some young man here who has been receiving a first-class education, he has no idea what for; he has been learning a multitude of things, perhaps a great deal which it would be much better if he did not know, but the Lord is meaning to make something of him. I do not know where you are, young man, but O, I wish I could fire you to night with a high ambition to serve God! What is the good of my being made at all if I do not serve my Maker? What is the use of my being here if I do not bring any glory to him who put

me and keeps me here? Why, I had better have been a piece of rotten dung strewn upon the field, and bringing forth something for the farmer's use, than to have been a mere consumer of bread and meat, and to have breathed the air and lived upon God's bounty, and yet to have done nothing for him. O young man, if such an army of you as we have to night, could all be led by divine grace to say with the apostle Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," why, there would be hope for Old England yet. We would yet fling Popery back to the seven hills whence it came. Oh that God would grant us this blessing; but if he should not be pleased to call all of us by his grace, yet may some here live to prove that they were separated from their mother's womb to God's work, and set apart that they might have the Son of God revealed in them, and might proclaim his gospel with power. We will now leave this point, but shall continue the same subject in another form.

**II.** You would, perhaps, say that all I have talked about as yet has been providence rather than grace. Very likely, but I think that providence and grace are very near akin; at any rate if providence is the wheel, grace is the hand which turns and guides it. But I am now about to speak of GRACE PRECEDING CALLING IN ANOTHER SENSE.

It strikes me that it is impossible to say, concerning the elect, when the grace of God begins to deal with them. You can tell when the quickening grace comes, but not when the grace itself comes. For know, in one sense, grace was exercised upon the chosen

*"Before the day-star knew its place,  
Or planets ran their round."*

I should say that there is what I cannot call by any other name than formative grace, exercised upon the vessels of mercy at their very birth. It seems to me to be no small mercy that some of us were born of such parents as we were, and that we were born where we were. Some of us began right, and were surrounded by many advantages. We were cradled upon the lap of piety, and dandled upon the knee of holiness. There are some children who are born with a constitution which cannot escape sin, and which at the same time seems as if it inevitably led them to it. Who can deny that there are some whose passions seem naturally to be so violent, that, notwithstanding almost any and every restraint, they run headlong into sin! and often those failings may be distinctly traced to their parents. It is no small blessing when we can look back and thank God, that if no blue-

blood of nobility flows in our veins, yet from our very childhood we have not heard the voice of blasphemy, nor strayed into the haunts of vice, but that in the very formation of our character, divine grace has ever been present with us. This formative grace many of you, I have no doubt, can trace in the examples and influences which have followed you from the cradle through life. Why, what a blessing to have had such a Sunday-school teacher as some of you had! Other children went to schools, but they had not such a teacher, or such a class as yours. What a privilege to have had such a minister as some of you had, though perhaps he has fallen asleep now! You know there were others who went to places where there was no earnestness, no life; but that good man who was blessed to you was full of anxiety for your soul, and at the very first, before you were converted, his preaching helped to form your character. Why, it strikes me that every word I heard, and everything I saw while I was yet a child or a youth, had a part in the formation of my after-life. Oh! what a mercy it is to be placed where a holy example and godly conversation tend to form the man in a godly mould. All this may be, you know, without grace. I am not speaking now of the work of effectual calling, but of that prevenient grace which is too much forgotten, though it so richly deserves to be remembered. Think, too, of the prayers which brought tears to our eyes, and the teaching that would not let us sin so deeply as others, of the light which glowed in us, even in our childhood, and seems to have dispelled something of our natural darkness. Think of that earnest face that used to look so steadily on us when we did wrong, and of that mother's tear which seemed as if it would burn itself into our hearts, when there had been something amiss, that made that mother anxious. All this, though it did not convert us, yet it helped to make us what we now are, and unto God let us give the glory.

Furthermore, while there was this formative grace, there seems to me to have gone with it very much of preventive grace. How many saints fall into sins which they have to regret even after conversion, while others are saved from leaving the path of morality to wander in the morass of lust and crime! Why, some of us were, by God's grace, placed in positions where we could not well have been guilty of any gross acts of immorality, even if we had tried. We were so hedged about by guardian-care, so watched and tended on every side, that we should have been dashing our heads against a stone wall if we had run into any great or open sin. Oh! what a mercy to be prevented from sinning, when God puts chains across the road, digs ditches, makes hedges, builds walls, and says to us, "No, you shall not go

that way, I will not let you; you shall never have that to regret; you may desire it, but I will hedge up your way with thorns; you may wish it, but it never shall be yours." Beloved, I have thanked God a thousand times in my life, that before my conversion, when I had ill desires I had no opportunities; and on the other hand, that when I had opportunities I had no desires; for when desires and opportunities come together like the flint and steel, they make the spark that kindles the fire, but neither the one nor the other, though they may both be dangerous, can bring about any very great amount of evil so long as they are kept apart. Let us, then, look back, and it this has been our experience bless the preventing grace of God.

Again, there is another form of grace I must mention, namely, restraining grace. Here, you see, I am making a distinction. There are many who did go into sin; they were not wholly prevented from it, but they could not go as far into it as they wanted to do. There is a young man here to-night-he will say how should I know-well, I do know-there is a young man here to-night who wants to commit a certain sin, but he cannot. Oh! how he wishes to go, but he cannot; he is placed in such a position of poverty that he cannot play the fine gentleman he would like. There is another; he wants to be dancing at such-and-such a lace, but thank God he is lame; there is another, who, if he had had his wish would have lost his soul, but since his blindness has come upon him there is some hope for him. Oh! how often God has thrown a man on a sick bed to make him well! He would have been such as he was even unto death if he had been well, but God has made him sick, and that sickness has restrained him from sin. It is a mercy for some men that they cannot do what they would, and though "to will is present" with them, yet even in sin, "how to perform that which they would they find not." Ah! my fine fellow, if you could have had your own way, you would have been at the top of the mountain by now! So you think, but no, you would have been over the precipice long before this if God had you climb at all, and so he has kept you in the valley because he has designs of love towards you, and because you shall not sin as others sin. Divine grace has its hand upon the bridle of your horse. You may spur your steed, and use the lash against the man who holds you back; or perhaps it is a woman, and you may speak bitter words against that wife, that sister, or that mother, whom God has put there to hold you back; but you cannot go on, you shall not go on. Another inch forward and you will be over the precipice and lost, and therefore God has put that hand there to throw your horse back on its haunches, and make you pause, and think,



and turn from the error of your ways. What a mercy it is that when God's people do go into sin to any extent, he speaks and says, "Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further; here shall thy proud sins be stayed!" There is, then, restraining grace.

We shall get still further into the subject when we come to what Dr. John Owen calls the preparatory work of grace. Have you ever noticed that parable about the different sorts of ground, and the sower of the seeds? A sower went forth to sow, and some of the seed fell on stony ground; you can understand that, because all men have stones in their hearts. Some fell on the thorns and thistles; you can comprehend that, because men are so given to worldly care. Another part of the seed fell on the beaten path; you can understand that—men are so occupied with worldliness. But how about the "good ground"? "Good ground"! Is there such a thing as "good ground" by nature? One of the evangelists says that it was "honest and good ground." Now, is there such a difference between hearts and hearts? Are not all men depraved by nature? Yes, he who doubts human depravity had better begin to study himself. Question: If all hearts are bad how are some hearts good? Reply: They are good comparatively ; they are good in a certain sense. It is not meant in the parable that that good ground was so good that it ever would have produced a harvest without the sowing of the seed, but that it had been prepared by providential influences upon it to receive the seed, and in that sense it may be said to have been "good ground."

Now let me show you how God's grace does come to work on the human heart so as to make it good soil before the living seed is cast into it, so that before quickening grace really visits it the heart may be called a good heart, because it is prepared to receive that grace. I think this takes place thus: first of all, before quickening grace comes, God often gives an attentive ear, and makes a man willing to listen to the Word. Not only does he like to listen to it, but he wants to know the meaning of it; there is a little excitement in his mind to know what the gospel tidings really are. He is not saved as yet, but it is always a hopeful sign when a man is willing to listen to the truth, and is anxious to understand it. This is one thing which prevenient grace does in making the soul good. In Ezekiel's vision, as you will recollect, before the breath came from the four winds the bones began to stir, and they came together bone to his bone. So, before the Spirit of God comes to a man in effectual calling, God's grace often comes to make

a stir in the man's mind, so that he is no longer indifferent to the truth, but is anxious to understand what it means.

The next mark of this gracious work is an ingenuousness of heart. Some persons will not hear you, or if they do they are always picking holes and finding fault, they are not honest and good ground. But there are others who say, "I will give the man a fair and an honest hearing; I will read the Bible; I will read it, too, honestly; I will really see whether it be the Word of God or not, I will come to it without any prejudices; or, if I have any prejudices I will throw them aside." Now, all this is a blessed work of preparatory grace, making the heart ready to receive effectual calling.

Then, when this willingness and ingenuousness are attended with a tender conscience, as they are in some unconverted people, this is another great blessing. Some of you are not converted, but you would not do wrong; you are not saints, but you would not tell a lie for the world. I thank God that there are some of you so excellent in morals, that if you were proposed to us for Church-membership, we could not raise any objection to you on that ground, at any rate. You are as honest as the day is long: as for the things of God, you are outwardly as attentive to them, and as diligent in them, as the most earnest and indefatigable Christians. Now, this is because your conscience is tender. When you do wrong you cannot sleep at night; and you do not feel at all easy in being without a Savior-I know some of you do not. You have not come to any decision; the grace of God has not really made you feel your thoroughly mined state; still you are not quite easy. In fact, to go farther, your affections, though not weaned altogether from earth, yet begin to tremble a little as though they would go heavenward. You want to be a Christian: when the communion-table is spread, you dare not come downstairs, but I see you looking on from the gallery, and you wish you were with us. You know you have not believed in Jesus Christ, and the world keeps you back from doing so; but still there is a kind of twitching in your conscience ; you do not know what it is, but there is a something got into you that makes you say at times, "O God, let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;" yes, and you even go farther than this, and ask to live the righteous man's life too. Now, remember, this will not save you: "Ye must be born again." But for all this the Church of God should feel deeply grateful, for they have seen in themselves that this is often God's preparatory work-clearing away the rubbish and rubble, and digging out the foundations, that Jesus Christ

might be laid therein, the cornerstone of future hope and of future happiness.

Another work of grace is the creation of dissatisfaction with their present state. How many men we have known who were consciously “without God and without hope in the world.” The apples of Sodom had turned to ashes and bitterness in their mouth, though at one time all was fair and sweet to their taste. The mirage of life with them has been dispelled, and instead of the green fields, and waving trees, and rippling waters, which their fevered imagination had conjured up in the desert, they can see now nought but the arid sand and wasteness of desolation, which appal their fainting spirits, and promise nothing; no, not even a grave to cover their whited bones, which shall remain a bleached memorial that “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Multitudes have been brought to see the deluge of sin which has covered even the high places of the earth, they find no rest for the sole of their foot, but as yet they know not of an ark, nor of a loving hand prepared to pull them in, as did Noah the dove in olden time. Look at the life of St. Augustine, how wearily he wanders hither and thither with a death-thirst in his soul, that no fount of philosophy, or scholastic argument, or heretical teaching could ever assuage. He was aware of his unhappy estate, and turned his eye round the circle of the universe looking for peace, not fully conscious of what he wanted, though feeling an aching void the world could never fill. He had not found the center, fixed and steadfast, around which all else revolved in ceaseless change. Now, all this appetite, this hunger and thirst, I look upon as not of the devil, nor of the human heart alone, it was of God. He strips us of all our earthly joy and peace, that, shivering in the cold blast, we might flee, when drawn by his Spirit, to the

“Man who is as a hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

Of course, I have not gone fully into this doctrine of prevenient grace, but I trust I have said just enough to waken the gratitude of all the saints who have experienced it, and to make them sing with greater emotion than they have ever done before-

*“Determined to save,  
he watched o’er my path  
When, Satan’s blind slave,  
I sported with death.”*

### III. And now we come to the last point, which is, PAUL'S ACTUAL CALLING BY DIVINE GRACE.

All preparatory work of which we have spoken, was not the source or origin of the vital godliness which afterwards distinguished that renowned servant of God-that came to him on a sudden. Beloved, there may be some here to-night, who cannot discern anything in themselves of God's work of grace at all. I do not wonder at this. I do not suppose that the apostle could discern it in himself, or even thought of looking for it. He was as careless of Christ as is the butterfly of the honey in the flowers. He lived with no thought of honoring Jesus, and no desire to magnify him: but with the very reverse passion, glowing like a hot coal within his soul; and yet in a moment he was turned from an enemy into a friend! Oh! what a mercy it would be if some here tonight, were turned from enemies into friends in a moment: and we are not without hope but that this will be the case.

You have hated Christ, my friend; you have hated him boldly and decidedly; you have not been a sneaking sort of adversary, but have opposed him frankly and openly. Now, why did you do it? I am sorry for your sin, but I like your honesty. What is there in the person of Christ for you to hate? Men hated him while he was on earth, and yet he died for them! Can you hate him for that? He came into this world to gain no honor for himself-he had honor enough in heaven, but he gave it up for the sake of men. When he died, he had not amassed a fortune, nor gathered about him a troop of soldiers, nor had he conquered provinces, but he died naked on a cross! Nothing brought him here but disinterested affection; and when he came, he spent his life in deeds of holiness and good. For which of these things can you hate him? The amazing lovingkindness of Christ Jesus towards sinners, should in itself disarm their animosity, and turn their hatred of him to love. Alas! I know that this thought of itself will not do it, but the Spirit of God can. If the Spirit of God once comes in contact with your souls, and shows you that Christ died for you, your enmity towards Christ will be all over then. Dr. Gifford once went to see a woman in prison who had been a very gross offender. She was such a hardened reprobate, that the doctor began by discoursing with her about the judgments of God, and the punishments of hell, but she only laughed him to scorn, and called him opprobrious names. The doctor burst into tears, and said, "And yet, poor soul, there is mercy for you, even for such as you are, though you have laughed in the face of him who would do you good. Christ is able to forgive you, had though you are; and I hope that he will

yet take you to dwell with him at his right hand.” In a moment the woman stopped her laughing, sat down quietly, burst into tears, and said, “Don’t talk to me in that way; I have always been told that I should be damned, and I made up my mind to he; I knew there was no chance, and so I have gone on from one sin to another: but oh! if there is a hope of mercy for me, that is another thing; if there is a possibility of my being forgiven, that is another thing.” The doctor at once opened his Bible, and began to read to her these words, “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin;” the greatest brokenness of heart followed. In subsequent visits the doctor was gratified to find that she was brought to Christ; and though she had to undergo a sentence of transportation for many years at the time, yet in after days the godly man saw her walking honestly and uprightly as a believer in Jesus Christ.

Sinner, I wish that thought would bring thee to Christ! O that thou wouldst know that he hath chosen thee, that he hath separated thee for himself, amid to be his even from thy mother’s womb! Ah! thou hast played the harlot, but he will bring thee back; thou hast sinned very greatly, but thou shalt one day be clothed in the white robe, and wear the everlasting crown. Oh! blush and be confounded that thou shouldst ever have sinned as thou hast done. Thou hast been a thief, and a drunkard; thou hast brought thy mother’s grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, but her prayers are going up even now to heaven, and thou shalt be brought in yet. O stubborn sinner, my Master means to have thee. Run as thou wilt, thou wandering sheep, the Shepherd is after thee: yield thee, yield thee, yield thee now. O prodigal, thy Father’s heart is open, arise, go thou to thy Father. Thou art ashamed to go, art thou? Oh! let that shame make thee go the faster; let it not keep thee back. Jesus bled, Jesus wept, Jesus lives in heaven. “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, let him buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” “

Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” There is no sinner too black to be forgiven. There are no iniquities that can damn you if you believe in Jesus. All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto him who puts his trust in the shadow of Jehovah-Jesus. Look to him, he dies, he lives; look, he rises, he pleads above! “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” I trust that the whole of your past mysterious life, my dear fellow-sinner, will be explained to you to-night, by your believing in Jesus. That will be the golden key which will open the secret, and you will say, “Now I see it; I

could not tell what that mysterious hand was that kept me back from doing a certain thing; I could not understand why I was led into, such a path, but now I know that it was to take me to the feet of the blessed Savior, where I might be happy for ever." As you look back, and think of all the dealings of divine grace and providence with you throughout your life, you will sing-

*"Ah! who am I, that God hath saved  
Me from the doom I did desire,  
And crossed the lot myself did crave,  
To set me higher!"*

I must give one word of warning to those who are afflicting themselves with a notion that in order to true, real conversion, they must have a long course of agonising soul-conflict. You must mark, that I am not teaching this, the new birth was instantaneous, at once. Saul of Tarsus calls him Lord, and it is only three days that darkness rests upon him. This is the longest case recorded in the Bible-and how short a time in darkness and anguish that is, compared with the experience of some, whom you are regarding as models on which God must act in your case. Remember, that God is not the God of uniformity, though he is of union and peace. He may lead you at once into joy and peace, as Nathanael, who said as soon as he saw Christ, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." God may, and doubtless has been blessing you through his grace from your birth; but he needs not to plunge you many days in the cold, dark waters of conviction, to wash away your sin: the blood of Christ at once can cleanse from all sin, if you confide your soul to him. Believe, therefore, and you are at once justified and at peace with God.

May the Lord bless you all, for Jesus' sake.

# SATANIC HINDRANCES.

NO. 657

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 29TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Satan hindered us.”-1 Thessalonians 2:18.*

PAUL, and Silas, and Timothy, were very desirous to visit the Church at Thessalonica, but they were unable to do so for the singular reason announced in the text, namely, “Satan hindered us.” It was not from want of will, for they had a very great attachment to the Thessalonian brethren, and they longed to look them in the face again. They said of the Thessalonians, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers: remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.” Their will was overruled as to visiting the Church together, but being anxious for its welfare, they sent Timothy alone to minister for a time in its midst. It was not want of will which hindered them, but want of power. They were not prevented by God’s special providence. We find on certain occasions that Paul was not allowed to go precisely where his heart would have led him. “They assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.” “They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,” but their course was directed towards Troas that they might preach in Europe the unsearchable riches of Christ. They could not, however, trace their absence from Thessalonica to any divine interposition; it appeared to them to proceed from the great adversary: “Satan hindered them.” How Satan did so it would be useless to affirm dogmatically, but we may form a reasonable conjecture. I find in the margin of my pulpit Bible by Bagster, this note, which may probably be correct. “Satan hindered Paul by raising such a storm of persecution against him at Berea, and other places, that it was deemed prudent to delay his visit till the storm was somewhat allayed.” Yet I can hardly allow this to

have been the only hindrance, for Paul was very courageous, and having a strong desire to visit Thessalonica, no fear of opposition would have kept him away. He did not shun the hottest part of the battle, but like a truly valiant champion, delighted most to be found in the thick of his foes. Possibly the antagonism of the various philosophers whom he met with at Athens, and the heresies at Corinth, from which it seems that this epistle was written, may have called for his presence on the scene of action. He felt that he could not leave struggling Churches to their enemies; he must contend with the grievous wolves, and unmask the evil ones who wore the garb of angels of light. Satan had moved the enemies of the truth to industrious opposition, and thus the apostle and his companions were hindered from going to Thessalonica. Or it may be that Satan had excited dissensions and discords in the Churches which Paul was visiting, and therefore he was obliged to stop first in one and then in another to settle their differences to bring to bear the weight of his own spiritual influence upon the various divided sections of the Church to restore them to unity. Well, whether persecution, or philosophic heresy, or the divisions of the Church, were the outward instruments we cannot tell, but Satan was assuredly the prime mover. You will perhaps wonder why the devil should care so much about Paul and his whereabouts. Why should he take so much interest in keeping these three men from that particular Church? This leads us to observe what wonderful importance is attached to the action of Christian ministers. Here is the master of all evil, the prince of the power of the air, intently watching the journeying of three humble men; and apparently far more concerned about their movements than about the doings of Nero or Tiberius. These despised heralds of mercy were his most dreaded foes; they preached that name which makes hell tremble; they declared that righteousness against which Satanic hate always vents itself with its utmost power. With malicious glance the archenemy watched their daily path, and with cunning hand hindered them at all points. It strikes us that Satan was desirous to keep these apostolic men from the Church of Thessalonica because the Church was young and weak, and he thought that if it was not fostered and succoured by the preaching and presence of Paul he might yet slay the young child. Moreover, he has of old a fierce hatred of the preaching of the gospel, and possibly there had been no public declaration of the truth throughout Thessalonica since Paul had gone, and he was afraid lest the fire-brands of gospel truth should be again flung in among the masses, and a gracious conflagration should take place. Besides, Satan always hates Christian fellowship; it is his policy to keep Christians



apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. He attaches far more importance to godly intercourse than we do. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation: and so he would keep Paul away from these brethren who might have gladdened his heart, and whose hearts he might have cheered; he would hinder their fraternal intercourse that they might miss the strength which always flows from Christian communion and Christian sympathy.

This is not the only occasion in which Satan has hindered good men: indeed this has been his practice in all ages, and we have selected this one particular incident that some who are hindered by Satan may draw comfort from it, and that we may have an opportunity (if the Spirit of God shall enable us) of saying a good and forceful word to any who count it strange because this fiery trial has happened unto them.

**I.** Let us open our discourse by observing that IT HAS BEEN SATAN'S PRACTICE OF OLD TO HINDER, WHEREVER HE COULD, THE WORK OF GOD. "Satan hindered us" is the testimony which all the saints in heaven will bear against the arch enemy. This is the witness of all who have written a holy line on the historic page, or carved a consecrated name on the rock of immortality, "Satan hindered us."

In sacred writ, we find Satan interfering to hinder the completeness of the personal character of individual saints. The man of Uz was perfect and upright before God, and to all appearance, would persevere in producing a finished picture of what the believer in God should be fault with his actions, and only dared to impute wrong motives to him. Indeed so had he been enabled to live that the arch-fiend could find no He had considered Job, and he could find no mischief in him; but then he hinted "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" Satan sought to turn the life-blessing which Job was giving to God into a curse, and therefore he buffeted him sorely. He stripped him of all his substance. The evil messengers trod upon one another's heels: and their tidings of woe only ceased when his goods were all destroyed and his children had all perished. The poor afflicted parent was then smitten in his bone and in his flesh, till he was fain to sit upon a dunghill and scrape himself with a potsherd. Even then the picture had no blot of sin upon it, the pencil was held with a steady hand by the patient one; and therefore Satan made another attempt to hinder his retaining his holy character; he excited his wife to say, "Wherefore dost thou hold fast

thy integrity? Curse God, and die.” This was a great and grievous hindrance to the completion of Job’s marvellous career, but, glory be unto God, the man of patience not only overcame Satan, but he made him a stepping-stone to a yet greater height of illustrious virtue; for ye know the patience of Job, and ye would not have known it if Satan had not illuminated it with the blaze of flaming afflictions. Had not the vessel been burnt in the furnace, the bright colors had not been so fixed and abiding. The trial through which Job passed, brought out the lustre of his matchless endurance in submission and resignation to God. Now, just as the enemy of old waylaid and beset the patriarch to hinder his perseverance in the fair path of excellence, so will he do with us. You may be congratulating yourself this morning, “I have hitherto walked consistently; no man can challenge my integrity.” Beware of boasting, for your virtue will yet be tried; Satan will direct his engines against that very virtue for which you are the most famous. If you have been hitherto a firm believer, your faith will ere long be attacked; if up till now you have been meek as Moses, expect to be tempted to speak unadvisedly with your lips. The birds will peck at your ripest fruit, and the wild hoar will dash his tusks at your choicest vines. O that we had among us more eminence of piety, more generosity of character, more fidelity of behavior! In all these respects, I doubt not, many have set out with the highest aims and intentions, but alas! how often have they had to cry, “Satan hindered us!”

This is not the enemy’s only business; for he is very earnest in endeavoring to hinder the emancipation of the Lord’s redeemed ones. Ye know the memorable story of Moses: when the children of Israel were in captivity in Egypt, God’s servant stood before their haughty oppressor with his rod in his hand and in Jehovah’s name he declared, “Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me.” A sign was required. The rod was cast upon the ground, and it became a serpent. At this point, Satan hindered. Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses. We read that the magicians did so with their enchantments, whether by devilish arts or by sleight of hand, we need not now enquire: in either case they did the devil service, and they did it well-for Pharaoh’s heart was hardened when he saw that the magicians wrought, in appearance, the self-same miracles as Moses. Brethren, take this as a type of Satan’s hindrances to the word of the Lord. Christ’s servants came forth to preach the gospel; their ministry was attended with signs and wonders. “My kingdom is shaken,” said the prince of evil, “I must bestir myself;” and straightway he sent magicians to work lying signs

and wonders without number. Apocryphal wonders were and are as plentiful as the frogs of Egypt. Did the apostles preach the sacrifice of Christ?-the devil's apostles preached the sacrifice of the mass. Did the saints uplift the cross?-the devil's servants upheld the crucifix. Did God's ministers speak of Jesus as the one infallible Head of the Church?-the devil's servants proclaimed the false priest of Rome as standing in the self-same place. Romanism is a most ingenious imitation of the gospel: it is the magicians "doing so with their enchantments." If you study well the spirit and genius of the great Antichrist, you will see that its great power lies in its being an exceedingly clever counterfeit of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As far as tinsel could counterfeit gold, and paste could simulate the gem, and candle-light could rival the sun in its glory, and a drop in the bucket could imitate the sea in its strength, it has copied God's great masterpiece, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; and to this day, as God's servants scatter the pure gold of truth, their worst enemies are those who utter base coin, on which they have feloniously stamped the image and superscription of the King of kings.

You have another case farther on in history-and all Old Testament history is typical of what is going on around us now. God was about to give a most wonderful system of instruction to Israel and to the human race, by way of type and ceremony, in the wilderness. Aaron and his sons were selected to represent the great High Priest of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. In every garment which they wore there was a symbolical significance: every vessel of that sanctuary in which they ministered taught a lesson: every single act of worship, whether it were the sprinkling of blood or the burning of incense, was made to teach precious and important truths to the sons of men. What a noble roll was that volume of the book which was unfolded in the wilderness, at the foot of Sinai! How God declared himself and the glory of the coming Messiah in the persons of Aaron and his sons! What then? With this Satan interfered. Moses and Aaron could say, "Satan hindered us." Korah, Dathan, and Abiram arrogantly claimed a right to the priesthood; and on a certain day they stood forth with brazen censers in their hands, thrusting themselves impudently into the office which the Lord had assigned to Aaron and to his sons. The earth opened and swallowed them up alive: true prophecy of what shall become of those who thrust themselves into the office of the priesthood where none but Jesus Christ can stand. You may see the parallel this day. Christ Jesus is the only priest who offers sacrifice of blood, and he

brings that sacrifice no more, for having once offered it he has perfected for ever those who are set apart. "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Paul, with the strongest force of logic, proves that Christ does not offer a continual sacrifice, but that, having offered it once for all his work is finished, and he sits down at the right hand of the Father. Now, this doctrine of a finished atonement and a completed sacrifice seemed likely to overrun the world—it was such a gracious unfolding of the divine mind, that Satan could not look upon it without desiring to hinder it; and, therefore, look ye on every hand, and you can see Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, in those Churches which are branches of Antichrist, I mean the Anglican and the Roman. Men to this very day, call themselves "priests," and read prayers from a book in which the rubric runs, "Then shall the priest say — These arrogate to themselves a priesthood other than that which is common to all the saints: some of them even claim to offer a daily sacrifice, to celebrate an unbloody sacrifice at the thing which they call an altar; and they claim to have power to forgive sin, saying to sick and dying persons, "By authority committed unto me, I absolve thee from all thy sins." This in England, and this throughout Europe, is the great hindrance to the propagation of the gospel—the priestly pretensions of a set of men who are no priests of God, though they may be priests of Baal. Thus the ministers of Jesus are made to cry, "Satan hindereth us."

Take another instance of Satanic hatred. When Joshna had led the tribes across the Jordan, they were to attack the various cities which God had given them for a heritage, and from Dan to Beersheba the whole land was to be theirs. After the taking of Jericho, the first contact into which they came with the heathen Canannites, ended in disastrous defeat to the servants of God. "They fled," it is written, "before the men of Ai." Here again you hear the cry, "Satan hindered us." Joshua might have gone from city to city exterminating the nations, as they justly deserved to be, but Achan had taken of the accursed thing and hidden it in his tent, therefore no victory could be won by Israel till his theft and sacrilege had been put away. Beloved, this is symbolic of the Christian Church. We might go from victory to victory; our home mission operations might be successful, and our foreign agencies might be crowned with triumph, if it were not that we have Achans in the camp at home. When Churches have no conversions, it is more than probable that hypocrites concealed among them have turned away the Lord's blessing. You who are inconsistent, who make the

profession of religion the means of getting wealth, you who unite yourselves with God's people, but at the same time covet the goodly Babylonish garment, and the wedge of gold, you are those who cut the sinews of Zion's strength; you prevent the Israel of God from going forth to victory. Ah! little do we know, beloved, how Satan has hindered us. We, as a Church, have had much reason to thank God, but how many more might within these walls have been added to the number of this Church if it had not been for the coldness of some, the indifference of others, the inconsistency of a few, and the worldliness of many more! Satan hinders us not merely by direct opposition, but by sending Achans into the midst of our camp.

I will give you one more picture. View the building of Jerusalem after it had been destroyed by the Babylonians. When Ezra and Nehemiah were found to build, the devil was sure to stir up Sanballat and Tohiah to cast down. There was never a revival of religion without a revival of the old enmity. If ever the Church of God is to be built, it will be in troublous times. When God's servants are active, Satan is not without vigilant myrmidons who seek to counteract their efforts.

The history of the Old Testament Church is a history of Satan endeavoring to hinder the work of the Lord. I am sure you will admit it has been the same since the days of the Lord Jesus Christ. When he was on earth Satan hindered him. He dared to attack him to his face personally; and when that failed, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and men of all sorts hindered him. When the apostles began their ministry, Herod and the Jews sought to hinder them; and when persecution availed not, then all sorts of heresies and schisms broke out in the Christian Church: Satan still hindered them. A very short time after the taking up of our Lord, the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, had become like earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter; the glory had departed, and the lustre of truth was gone, because by false doctrine, lukewarmness, and worldliness, Satan hindered them. When the Reformation dawned, if God raised up a Luther, the devil brought out an Ignatius Loyola to hinder him. Here in England, if God had his Latimers and his Wickcliffes, the devil had his Gardiners and Bonners. When in the modern reformation Whitfield and Wesley thundered like the voice of God, there were ordained reprobates found to hinder them, to hold them up to opprobrium and shame. Never, since the first hour struck in which goodness came into conflict with evil, has it ceased to be true that Satan hindered us. From all points of the compass, all along the

line of battle, in the vanguard and in the rear, at the dawn of day and in the midnight, Satan hindered us. If we toil in the field he seeks to break the ploughshare; if we build the walls he labors to cast down the stones; if we would serve God in suffering or in conflict- everywhere Satan hinders us.

## **II. We shall now, in the second place, INDICATE MANY WAYS IN WHICH SATAN HAS HINDERED US.**

The prince of evil is very busy in hindering those who are just coming to Jesus Christ. Here he spends the main part of his skill. Some of us who know the Savior recollect the fierce conflicts which we had with Satan when we first looked to the cross and lived. Others of you, here this morning, are just passing through that trying season: I will address myself to you. Beloved friends, you long to be saved, but ever since you have given any attention to these eternal things you have been the victim of deep distress of mind. Do not marvel at this. This is usual, so usual as to be almost universal. I should not wonder if you are perplexed with the doctrine of election. It will be suggested to you that you are not one of the chosen of God, although your common sense will teach you that it might just as well be suggested to you that you are, since you know neither the one nor the other, nor indeed can know until you have believed in Jesus; your present business is with the precept which is revealed, not with election which is concealed. Your business is with that exhortation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It is possible that the great fightingground between predestination and free-will may be the dry and desert place in which your soul is wandering: now you will never find any comfort there. The wisest of men have despaired of ever solving the mystery of those two matters, and it is not at all probable that you will find peace in puzzling yourself about it. Your business is not with metaphysical difficulty, but with faith in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is simple and plain enough. It is possible that your sins now come to your remembrance, and though once you thought little enough of them, now it is hinted to you by Satanic malice that they are too great to be pardoned; to which, I pray you, give the lie, by telling Satan this truth, that "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." It is very likely that the sin against the Holy Ghost much molests you. You read that whosoever shall speak a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him. In this, too, you may be greatly tried; and I wonder not that you are, for this is a most painfully difficult subject. One fact may cheer you-if you repent of your sins, you have not committed the unpardonable

offense, since that sin necessitates hardness of heart for ever; and so long as a man has any tenderness of conscience, and any softness of spirit, he has not so renounced the Holy Spirit as to have lost his presence. It may be that you are the victim of blasphemous thoughts. This very inorning, since you have been sitting here, torrents of the filth of hell have been pouring through your soul. At this be not astonished, for there are some of us who delight in holiness and are pure in heart, who nevertheless, have been at times sorely tried with thoughts which were never born in our hearts, but which were injected into them—suggestions born in hell, not in our spirits; to be hated, and to be loathed, but cast into our minds that they might hinder and trouble us. Now though Satan may hinder thee as he did the child who was brought to Jesus, of whom we read that as he was “a coming, the devil threw him down and tare him,” yet do thou come notwithstanding; for though seven devils were in him, Jesus would not cast the coming sinner out. Even though thou shouldst feel a conviction that the unpardonable sin has fallen to thy lot, yet dare to trust in Jesus; and, if thou dost do that, I warrant thee there shall be a joy and a peace in believing which shall overcome him of whom we read, that he hath “hindered us.”

But I must not stop long on any one point where there are so many.

Satan is sure to hinder Christians when they are earnest in prayer. Have you not fequently found, dear friends, when you have been most earnest in supplication, that something or other will start across your mind to make you cease from the exercise? It appears to me that we shake the tree and no fruit drops from it; and just when one more shake would bring down the luscious fruit, the devil touches us on the shoulder and tells us it is time to be gone, and so we miss the blessing we might have attained. I mean that just when prayer would be the most successful we are tempted to abstain from it. When my spirit has sometimes laid hold upon the angel, I have been painfully conscious of a counter influence urging nie to cease from such importunity, and let the Lord alone, for his will would be done; or if the temptation did not come in that shape yet in some other, to cease to pray because prayer after all could not avail. O brethren, I know if you are much in prayer you can sing Cowper’s hymn—

*“What various hindrances we meet  
In coming to the mercy seat.”*

The same is true of Christians when under the promptings of the Spirit of God, or when planning any good work. You have been prompted

sometimes to speak to such a one. "Run, speak to that young man," has been the message in your ear. You have not done it-Satan has hindered you. You have been told on a certain occasion-you do not know how, (but believe me we ought to pay great respect to these inward whispers) to visit such-and-such a person and help him. You have not done it-Satan hindered you. You have been sitting down by the fire one evening reading a missionary report concerning Hindostan, or some district destitute of the truth, and you have thought "Now I have a little money which I might give to this object;" but then it has come across you that there is another way of spending it more profitably to your family-so Satan has hindered you. Or you yourself thought of doing a little in a certain district by way of preaching, and teaching, or commencing some new Ragged School, or some other form of Christian effort, but as sure as ever you began to plan it something or other arose, and Satan hindered you. If he possibly can, he will come upon God's people in those times when they are full of thought and ardor, and ready for Christian effort, that he may murder their infant plans and cast these suggestions of the Holy Spirit out of their minds. How often too has Satan hindered us when we have entered into the work! In fact, beloved, we never ought to expect a success unless we hear the devil making a noise. I have taken it as a certain sign that I am doing little good when the devil is quiet. It is generally a sign that Christ's kingdom is coming when men begin to lie against you, and slander you, and the world is in an uproar, casting out your name as evil. Oh! those blessed tempests! Do not give me calm weather when the air is still and heavy, and when lethargy is creeping over one's spirit. Lord, send a hurricane, give us a little stormy weather: when the lightning flashes and the thunder rolls, then God's servants know that the Lord is abroad and that his right hand is no longer in his bosom, that the moral atmosphere will get clear, that God's kingdom will come, and his will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven. "Peace, peace, peace," that is the flap of the dragon's wings; the stern voice which proclaims perpetual war is the voice of the Captain of our salvation. You say, how is this? "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Peace, physical, Christ does make; there is to be no strife with the fist, no blow with the sword, but peace, moral, and peace, spiritual, can never be in this world where Jesus Christ is, so long as error is there. But, you know, beloved, that you cannot do any good thing



but what the devil will be sure to hinder you. What then? up and at him! coward looks and faint counsels are not for warriors of the cross. Expect fightings and you will not be disappointed. Whitfield used to say that some divines would go from the first of January to the end of December with a perfectly whole skin; the devil never thought them worth while attacking; but, said he, let us begin to preach with all our might, and soul, and strength, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and men will soon put a fool's cap on our heads, and begin laughing at us, and ridiculing us: but if so, so much the better. We are not alarmed because Satan hindereth us.

Nor will he only hinder us in working; he will hinder us in seeking to unite with one another. We are about to make an effort, as Christian Churches in London, to come closer together, and I am happy to find indications of success; but I should not wonder but what Satan will hinder us, and I would ask your prayers that Satan may be put to the rout in this matter, and that the union of our Churches may be accomplished. As a Church ourselves, we have walked together in peace for a long time, but I should not marvel if Satan should try to thrust in the cloven foot to hinder our walking in love, and peace, and unity.

Satan will hinder us in our communion with Jesus Christ. When at his table we say to ourselves, "I shall have a sweet moment now," but just then vanity intrudes. Like Abraham, you offer the sacrifice, but the unclean birds come down upon it, and you have need to drive them away. "Satan hindered us." He is not omnipresent, but by his numerous servants he works in all kinds of places, and manages to distract the saints when they would serve the Lord.

### **III.** In the third place THERE ARE TWO OR THREE RULES BY WHICH THESE HINDRANCES MAY BE DETECTED AS SATANIC.

I think I heard somebody saying to himself this morning, "Yes, I should have risen in the world, and have been a man of money now if it had not been that Satan hindered me." Do not you believe it, dear friend. I do not believe that Satan generally hinders people from getting rich. He would just as soon that they should be rich as poor. He delights to see God's servants set upon the pinnacle of the temple, for he knows the position to be dangerous. High places and God's praise do seldom well agree. If you have been hindered in growing rich, I should rather set that down to the good providence of God which would not place you where you could not have borne the temptation. "Yes," said another, "I had intended to have lived in

a certain district and done good, and have not been able to go: perhaps that is the devil." Perhaps it was: perhaps it was not. God's providence will know best where to place us. We are not always choosers of our own locality: and so we are not always to conclude when we are hindered and disappointed in our own intentions that Satan has done it, for it may very often be the good providence of God.

But how may I tell when Satan hinders me? I think you may tell thus: first, by the object. Satan's object in hindering us is to prevent our glorifying God. If anything has happened to you which has prevented your growing holy, useful, humble, and sanctified, then you may trace that to Satan. If the distinct object of the interference to the general current of your life has been that you may be turned from righteousness into sin, then from the object you may guess the author. It is not God who does this, but Satan. Yet know that God does sometimes put apparent hindrances in the way of his own people, even in reference to their usefulness and growth in grace, but then his object is still to be considered: it is to try his saints and so to strengthen them; while the object of Satan is to turn them out of the right road and make them take the crooked way.

You may tell the suggestions of Satan, again, by the method in which they come: God employs good motives, Satan bad ones. If that which has turned you away from your object has been a bad thought, a bad doctrine, bad teaching, a bad motive — that never came from God, that must be from Satan.

Again, you may tell them from their nature. Whenever an impediment to usefulness is pleasing, gratifying to you, consider that it came from Satan. Satan never brushes the feathers of his birds the wrong way; he generally deals with us according to our tastes and likings. He flavours his bait to his fish. He knows exactly how to deal with each man, and to put that motive which will fall in with the suggestions of poor carnal nature. Now, if the difficulty in your way is rather contrary to yourself than for yourself, then it comes from God; but if that which now is a hindrance brings you gain, or pleasure, or emolument in any way, rest assured it came from Satan.

We can tell the suggestions of Satan, once more, by their season. Hindrances to prayer, for instance, if they are Satanic, come out of the natural course and relation of human thoughts. It is a law of mental science that one thought suggests another, and the next the next, and so on, as the links of a chain draw one another. But Satanic temptations do not come in

the regular order of thinking; they dash upon the mind at unawares. My soul is in prayer: it would be unnatural that I should then blaspheme, yet then the blasphemy comes; therefore it is clearly Satanic, and not from my own mind. If I am set upon doing my Master's will, and presently a recreant thought assails me, that being apart from the natural run of my mind and thoughts, may be at once ejected as not being mine, and may be set down to the account of the devil, who is the true father of it. By these means I think we may tell when Satan hinders, and when it is our own heart, or when it is of God. We ought carefully to watch that we do not put the saddle on the wrong horse. Do not blame the devil when it is yourself, and on the other hand, when the Lord puts a bar in your way, do not say, "That is Satan," and so go against the providence of God. It may be difficult at times to see the way of duty, but if you go to the throne of God in prayer you will soon discover it. "Bring hither the ephod," said David, when he was in difficulty. Say you the same? Go you to the great High Priest, whose business it is to give forth the oracle! Lo, upon his breast hangs the Urim and Thummim, and you shall from him find direction in every time of difficulty and dilemma.

**IV.** Supposing that we have ascertained that hindrances in our way really come from Satan, WHAT THEN? I have but one piece of advice, and that is, go on, hindrance or no hindrance, in the path of duty as God the Holy Ghost enables you. If Satan hinders you, I have already hinted that this opposition should cheer you. "I did not expect," said a Christian minister, "to be easy in this particular pastorate, or else I would not have come here; for I always count it," said he, "to be my duty to show the devil that I am his enemy, and if I do that, I expect that he will show me that he is mine." If you are now opposed and you can trace that opposition distinctly to Satan, congratulate yourself upon it: do not sit down and fret. Why, it is a great thing that a poor creature like you can actually vex the great prince of darkness and win his hate. It makes the race of man the more noble that it comes in conflict with a race of spirits, and stands foot to foot even with the prince of darkness himself. It is a dreadful thing, doubtless, that you should be hindered by such an adversary, but it is most hopeful, for if he were your friend you might have cause to fear indeed. Stand out against him, because you have now an opportunity of making a greater gain than you could have had had he been quiet. You could never have had a victory over him if you had not engaged in conflict with him. The poor saint would go on his inglorious way to heaven if he were unmolested, but being

molested, every step of his pathway becomes glorious. Our position to-day is like that described by Bunyan, when from the top of the palace the song was heard-

*“Come in, come in,  
Eternal glory thou shalt win.”*

Now merely to ascend the stairs of the palace, though safe work, would not have been very ennobling; but when the foemen crowded round the door, and blocked up every stair, and the hero came to the man with the ink-horn, who sat before the door and said, “Write my name down, sir;” then to get from the lowest step to the top where the bright ones were singing, every inch was glorious. If devils did not oppose my path from earth to heaven, I might travel joyously, peacefully, safely, but certainly without renown; but now, when every step is contested in winning our pathway to glory, every single step is covered with immortal fame. Press on then, Christian, the more opposition, the more honor.

Be in earnest against these hindrances when you consider, again, what you lose if you do not resist him and overcome him. To allow Satan to overcome me would be eternal ruin to my soul. Certainly it would for ever blast all hopes of my usefulness. If I retreat and turn my back in the day of battle what will the rest of God’s servants say? What shouts of derision will ring over the battle-field! How will the banner of the covenant be trailed in the mire! Why, we must not, we dare not, play the coward; we dare not give way to the insinuation of Satan and turn from the Master, for the defeat were then too dreadful to be endured. Beloved, let me feed your courage with the recollection that your Lord and Master has overcome. See him there before you. He of the thorn-crown has fought the enemy and broken his head:

Satan has been completely worsted by the Captain of your salvation; and that victory was representative—he fought and won it for you. You have to contend with a defeated foe, and one who knows and feels his disgrace; and though he may fight with desperation, yet he fights not with true courage, for he is hopeless of ultimate victory. Strike, then, for Christ has smitten him. Down with him, for Jesus has had him under his foot. Thou, weakest of all the host, triumph thou, for the Captain has triumphed before thee.

Lastly, remember that you have a promise to make you gird up your loins and play the man this day. “Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you.” Christian minister, resign not your situation; do not think of sending in your resignation because the Church is divided and because the enemy is making head. Resist the devil. Flee not, but make him flee. Christian young men, you who have begun to preach in the street, or distribute tracts, or visit from house to house, though Satan hinders you very much I pray you now redouble your efforts: it is because Satan is afraid of you that he resists you, because he would rob you of the great blessing which is now descending on your head. Resist him, and stand fast. Thou Christian pleading in prayer, let not go thy hold upon the covenant angel now; for now that Satan hinders thee, it is because the blessing is descending. Thou art seeking Christ, close not those eyes, turn not away thy face from Calvary’s streaming tree: now that Satan hinders thee, it is because the night is almost over, and the day-star begins to shine. Brethren, ye who are most molested, most sorrowfully tried, most borne down, yours is the brighter hope: be now courageous; play the man for God, for Christ, for your own soul, and yet the day shall come when you with your Master shall ride triumphant through the streets of the New Jerusalem, sin, death, and hell, captive at your chariot wheels, and you with your Lord crowned as victor, having overcome through the blood of the Lamb. May God bless dear friends now present. I do not know to whom this sermon may be most suitable, but I believe it is sent especially to certain tried saints. The Lord enable them to find comfort in it. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-1 Peter 4:12***

# FROM THE DUNGHILL TO THE THRONE.

NO. 658

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 5TH 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.”- Psalm 113:7, 8.

THE greatness and majesty of the Most High God are utterly inconceivable. The most masterly minds, when in the most spiritual state, have felt it impossible for the utmost stretch of their imagination to reach to the grandeur of God. Our loftiest conceptions of the universe probably fall very far short of what it really is; although the researches of astronomy have revealed facts surpassing all the powers of the human mind, in the attempt to grasp them. Thought, reason, understanding, and even imagination, are bewildered in the vast and illimitable fields of space, amidst the marvels of God's handiwork. Yet all the wonders which the human eye has seen, or mortal spirit guessed at, are but parts of his ways. We have heard no more than one stanza of creation's never ending psalm. We have viewed but one stone in the vast mosaic of the Maker's works. An infusorial atom of life in a drop of water may know as much of the great sea, as we do of the universe as a whole. An ant crawling over a sand-heap by the seaside, must not boast of having counted the grains which bound the ocean: nor must the, most learned mortal dream that he has a full idea of the vast creation of God. Above all this, however, is the fact that all these wondrous works bear no more proportion to the unseen, all-powerful God, than one line written by the pen of Milton would bear to his masterly mind. When God hath made all that he ordains to create, and when we have seen all that he hath made, yet there remaineth in himself

infinite possibilities of creation. The potter is far greater than the vessel which he fashioneth, and the Lord is infinitely greater than all his works. He filleth all things, but all things cannot fill him. He containeth immensity; he graspeth eternity; but neither immensity nor eternity can compass him.

*“Great God, how infinite art thou!  
What worthless worms are we!”*

Very fittingly does the psalmist sing of him as God humbling himself to behold the things which are in heaven. Those majestic beings, cherubim and seraphim, who flash with wings of fire to obey the behests of the Eternal, are not to be observed of him unless, speaking after the manner of men, in condescension he stoops himself to view them. We sing of the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, as the Lord's, and speak of those glorious places as being his peculiar abode, and so they are; and yet the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and celestial spirits are as nothing when compared with him. Consider, then, the condescension of the Lord in visiting the sons of men! What a stoop is here, my brethren! From the throne of the Infinite, to the clay tenements of man! Surely in a moment you will perceive that all gradations of rank among our race of worms, must be less than nothing, and even contemptible with him. He does not consort with kings when he descends to earth, for what is their mimic pomp to him? He does not seek out for himself regal society, as being more worthy of his dignity than association with poverty, for what is the child's play of courtly grandeur to him? A king! what is he but a crowned worm! A king! what is he but dust and ashes risen a very little on the ash-heap than the rest of the dust? The Lord, therefore, makes but small account of the honor which cometh from man whose breath is in his nostrils.

*“With scorn divine, he turns his eyes  
From towers of haughty kings.”*

When his awful chariot rolls downward from the skies, he makes men mark the fact of his condescension by visiting men of low estate, lie would have to stoop to a palace; it is no more if he stoops to a dunghill. When he is engaged on mercy's errands, having bowed so low as to enter a cabinet-council chamber, it is scarce a step further to the haunt of poverty and the den of vice. Courage, ye humblest of the sons of men; he who reigns in glory despises none.

“He raiseth up the poor from the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill.” This has frequently occurred in providence. God in his arrangements singularly alters the position of men. History is not without many instances in which the uppermost have become lowest, and the lowest have been highest. Verily, “There are first that shall be last, and there are last that shall be first.” Solomon said, “I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking in the dust;” and the same thing has been seen even in these modern times, when kings have fled their thrones, and men who were prowling about in poverty, have mounted to imperial power. God in providence often laughs at pedigree and ancestry, and stains the honor and dignity of everything in which human nature boasts itself. From the kennel to the palace, is an easy ascent when heaven favors.

It is not upon providence that I intend to dilate, this morning. My text has a special bearing upon God’s acts of grace. Here it is above all others that we see the condescending sovereignty of his dealings. He takes the base things of the world, and the things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are. He selects for himself those whom men would have repudiated with scorn—he covers his tabernacle of witness with badgers’ skins, chooses unhewn stones to be the materials for his altar, a bush for a place of blazing manifestation, and a shepherd-boy to be the man after his own heart. Those persons and things which are despised among men, are often highly esteemed in the sight of God.

In considering the text this morning, let us notice the objects of God’s choice. First, where some of them are; secondly, how he takes them from their degraded state; thirdly, how he lifts them up; and fourthly, where he puts them.

It will be the history of a child of God, from the dunghill to the throne. Novelists are plastering our walls with sensational titles; there is one which might even satisfy them in their ambition to delight the morbid cravings of this age. “From the dunghill to the throne,” is a subject which ought to win your attention, and if it does not, the fault must surely lie with me; in it there will ever be a blessed novelty of interest; and yet we thank God that it is a correct description of the upward experience of all the Lord’s people. He finds tens of thousands in the dunghill-state, and bears them up by the arms of his mercy till he makes them to sit among the princes of his people.



**I. We will begin where God began with us. WHERE GOD’S CHOSEN ONES ARE WHEN HE MEETS WITH THEM.**

The expression used in the text implies, in the first place, that many of them are in the lowest scale socially. Sovereign grace has a people everywhere, in all ranks and conditions of men. Were we taken up to heaven, and did the heavenly spirits wear any token of their rank on earth, we should on returning, say, “Here and there I saw a king; I marked a few princes of the blood, and a handful of peers of the realm; I observed a little company of the prudent, and a slender band of the rich and famous; but I saw a great company of the poor and the unknown, who were rich in faith and known unto the Lord.” The Lord excludes no man from his election on account of his rank or condition. We shall not err if we say,

*“While grace is given to the prince,  
The poor receive their share;  
No mortal has a just pretense  
To perish in despair.”*

Yet how true it is that many of those whom God has chosen are found not simply among the workers, but among the poorest ranks of the sons of toil! There are some whose daily toil can scarcely find them bread enough to keep body and soul together, and yet they have fed daintily upon the bread of heaven. Many are clad in garments of the meanest kind, patched and mended everywhere, and yet they are as gloriously arrayed in the sight of God and the holy angels, as the brightest of the saints; “Yet, I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Some of the sweetest biographies of Christians have been the lives of the lowly culled from the annals of the poor. Who has not read “The Young Cottager” and “The Dairyman’s Daughter”? Who has not found the greatest pleasure in visiting those bed-ridden ones who lie in the alms’ room, those saints of God who owe to charity their daily food, because sickness has deprived them of the means of earning their bread? My poor hearer, you may this morning, while sitting in that pew, feel as if you were scarcely respectable enough to be in a place of worship, but I pray you let not your poverty hinder your receiving the gospel, whose peculiar glory it is that it is preached to the poor. You may have nothing at all in this world, not a foot of ground which you can call your own; you may have been fighting against adversity, a deadly struggle, year after year, and yet you may be still as poor as poverty itself; I will neither commend nor upbraid

your poverty, for there is nothing necessarily good or bad morally in any state of life, hut I beg that you will not let your circumstances discourage you in the matter of your spiritual interest before God. Come as a beggar, if you be a beggar. Come in rags, if you have no other covering. "He that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price!"

The expression in the text does not refer merely to social gradations; I have no doubt it has a more spiritual meaning. The dunghill is a place where men throw their worthless things. When you have quite done with an article, and cannot put it to any further use, you throw it away. It has been turned to two or three accounts since it was first employed for its original intention, and now it is in the way, and cannot longer be harboured; it is of no use to be sold even as old metal, and therefore you throw it on the dunghill that it may be taken away with the rubbish. How often have God's own chosen people felt themselves to be mere offscourings and sweepings, good for nothing but to be cast away! You, dear friends, are in a like case, for you have discovered your own utter worthlessness. Looking upon yourself in the light which you have received from heaven, your fancied value has all departed. You were very important once in your own esteem, but you now perceive that your loss, so far from affecting heaven and earth, would be of no more consequence to the world at large, than the throwing of a rotten fruit upon the dunghill, or the falling of a sere leaf from one forest tree amidst a myriad. In your own estimation there is in you a want of adaptation for any useful purpose; you are of no more use than salt which has lost its savor. You cannot glorify God as you could wish; you do not wish as much as you should. You can neither pray with the earnestness you desire, nor praise with the gratitude you wish to feel. Looking back upon your past life, you are heartily ashamed. In a corner you mourn out, "Lord, what a worthless piece of lumber I have been in this world! What a cumberer of the ground! What an unprofitable servant!" You have been useful to your family, or to your country, and once you thought this enough; but now you measure yourself as in the light of God; and inasmuch as you have never glorified him who made you, and have brought no honor to him who is your kind and gracious Preserver, you feel yourself to be so worthless, that if the Lord should throw you on the dunghill, and say, "Put him away! he is as worthless as dross and dung!" he would only treat you as you richly deserve. My dear friend, this estimate of yourself, though it brings you much unhappiness, is a very healthy sign.

When we think little of ourselves, God thinks much of us. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." He will not break thee, O thou bruised reed! He will not quench thee, O thou smoking flax! but though thou art only fit to be cast on the dunghill, his mercy will tenderly consider thee, and exalt thee among the princes of his people.

Again, the dunghill is a place of contempt. Contempt sometimes sneeringly says of its victim, "He is such a person, that I would not pick him up if I saw him on a dunghill." The sneer of the world condemns some persons thus: "Oh! they are good for nothing. A dunghill is too good for them." Possibly, my hearer, you may be placed in a family where you are much despised. You may not have the ability and sharpness of others of the household, and therefore you are much looked down upon, and are regarded as a poor simpleton, not worth noticing. You have not succeeded in life as others have done, and consequently you are viewed with much contempt by those who have prospered much and speedily. Nay, you feel this morning as if you merited the contempt poured upon you. You have been saying, "Ah! you despise me, but if you knew me as I know myself, you would despise me more. You think nothing of me, and I am less than nothing. You call me an ill name, but could you see the deceitfulness of my base heart, you would understand that the name might be worn in truth though given in jest." Well, despised one, let me remind you that the Lord has often looked upon those whom man has despised; and though your own parents may have taken no pleasure in you, and society may sneer at you, and you may yourself now feel as if the sneer were well deserved, yet take confidence and be of good heart, for God visits dunghills when he does not visit palaces, and he will lift up the humble and meek from the dust wherein they pine and languish.

The next remark may, perhaps, afford more comfort: the dunghill is like place for filthy and offensive things. We say of a foul and unsavoury thing, "It is too bad to be borne in the house, let it be swept away; put it away with the filth; cover it up." When a matter becomes noisome, putrid, offensive, we want it to be removed at once. Ah! sad that we should have to say this of any of our fellow creatures, but we must say it. There are some whose sins are terribly foul; their iniquities are so vile that they are an offense in the eyes and ears of all decent men: while the Holy God looks upon their actions with wrath and detestation. Some sinners have become so infamous in character that they are an injury to all associated with them; they cannot enter into any company without spreading the contagion of

their sin; their example is so bad that it is enough to poison the parish where they live. They are only fit to be put as so much rottenness, foulness, and putridity, on the dunghill where immorality rots out its hour of abomination. But, oh! the love of my Master; he has often stooped to rescue the abandoned from the dunghill. In heaven I see those who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, who once were harlots like Rahab, adulterers like David, and idolaters like Manasseh. Before the throne of God there stand to-day, among the peers of God, those who, in their days of unregeneracy, were thieves, and drunkards, and blasphemers. Heaven's courts are trodden by many who once were the chief or sinners, but who now are brightest among the saints. I pray you, beloved, never think that the gospel of Christ saved great offenders in years gone by, but that now it is only for the unfallen and moral. The moral are freely invited to Christ, which we never forget to testify, but the immoral are bidden too. The Lord came to our earth as a Physician; and he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; he came not to heal those who are already sound in health, but the sick. O my hearer, if thou be so sick with sin that thy whole head is sick and thy whole heart tainted, and from the crown of thy head to the sole of thy foot there is no soundness in thee, but nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores, yet still the love of my Master will stoop to you! If you have added lust to theft, and even murder to lust, if you are red-handed with infamous iniquity, yet the sacred crimson bath, which was filled from the heart of Jesus, can wash away "all manner of sin and blasphemy."

Whosoever believeth in him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. Refined minds thought just now that I was using a very ugly expression when I spoke of rescuing rottenness from the dunghill, but the expression is all too clean when compared with sin; for all the filth and loathsomeness that ever offended eye and nostril is sweetness itself compared with sin. The foulest and most detestable thing in the whole universe is sin. It is this which keeps the fire of hell burning as God's great sanitary necessity. There cannot but be a constant Tophet where there is such constant sin. We read that in certain French towns they kindled great public fires because of the cholera. The cholera! what is it compared with sin? Well may God cause the fiery flames of eternal torment to go up for ever and ever, for it is only by such terrific punishment that the plague of sin can be at all restrained within bounds. Sin is a horrible evil, a deadly poison; and yet, sinner, though thou be as full of it as an egg is full of meat, and as reeking with it as the foulest piece of noxious matter can be

reeking with foul smell, yet the infinite mercy of God in Christ Jesus can lift thee from this utmost degradation, and make thee to shine as a star in his kingdom at the last.

Once more, the dunghill may be spiritually considered as the place of condemnation. You look at a certain article of food for instance, and the economical housewife does not wish to waste anything. Well, if it may not serve for food, may it not be useful for something else? At last, when she sees that it is of no service, the sentence of condemnation is "Let it be cast on the dunghill." Nebuchadnezzar, in his memorable proclamation concerning the Lord Jehovah, said that whosoever should speak a word against him should be cut in pieces, and his house should be made a dunghill. There is a connection, then, between the dunghill and condemnation. Now there may be in this audience, this morning, a man who feels himself to be under sentence of condemnation. You have so often had prickings of conscience; so frequently have been taught better, and yet you have sinned against light and knowledge, that now you consider yourself to have sinned beyond the reach of mercy. My voice, this morning, very likely grates on your ear; though it is meant to convey to you the most gladsome tidings that ever silver trumpet rung out to bankrupt sinner on the day of Jubilee, yet it sounds to you like the voice which proclaims your doom. Well, poor sinner, if thou be in thyself condemned, and a hoarse voice has said, "To the dunghill with him! To the flames of hell with him!" yet I come to thee in Jehovah's name, and bid thee hear this word, this morning: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes." What sayest thou to this? What if God should forgive thee, this morning? What if he should make thee his child? What if he should give thee a crown of life that fadeth not away? "Olin!" say you "if he would, I would love and bless him." Sinner, he will do it if thou canst now believe in the Lord Jesus, whose blood cleanseth us from all sin. By the death of Jesus I beseech thee trust in the atoning sacrifice of Calvary, and thou shalt live to praise his redeeming love.

I must not, however, leave out a thought which just flashes on one's mind. A thing which lies upon the dunghill is in contact with disgusting associates; and, therefore, the text may represent those who have hitherto lived in the midst of evil associations. When these doors are opened, there often come in here, out of curiosity, persons who are not regular attendants at places of worship-I must say the most hopeful class that I ever address-

for some of you who have heard my voice and the voices of other ministers so long are almost hopeless; we might well give you up, for we have pleaded with you so frequently, and put the truth before you so constantly, that surely if it ever was to have been blessed to you it would have been blessed already. But those to whom the gospel is a new thing occasionally drop in, and some of these come from the very worst society, fresh from the theater, the gin palace, and worse places still—the name of Jesus scarcely known except as it may be used in blasphemy, and the person of God Most High never thought of except as he is invoked in a curse. Friend, we are glad that thou art here; thou hast been on the dunghill, thou art on the dunghill now; thou hast been living with publicans and harlots; thou hast kept sad company; thou has not been nurtured among the choice and the elite of mankind, on the contrary, thou hast lien among the pots, and dwelt in the hedges. Now it is such as thou art that Jesus Christ bids us gather inn. “Go out quickly into the lanes and into the hedges, and as many as ye find bid to the supper;” and they brought in the blind, and the halt, and the lame, and they took their seats and feasted where others who were first invited refused to come. I call to you, then, if such there be within my hearing, to you who do not often darken the doors of God’s sanctuary, to you who live among the profane and the debauched, turn to Jesus Christ, I pray you! May the eternal spirit turn you this day, and may you be found among the chosen of God ! Alas! and woe is me that I should have to say it, some of you, my hearers, who have been moral and excellent, and have listened to the Word these years, will, I solemnly fear, perish in your sins; for verily, verily, I say unto you, publicans and harlots will enter into the kingdom of heaven before some of you who hear the Word but do it not, and listen to it but feel not its power, and know the joyful sound but do not receive it in your hearts.

Thus much, then, as to where some of God’s people are found. Let me say, that in a certain sense, this is where they all are—all on the dunghill of Adam’s fall, all on the dunghill of self-conceit, self-righteousness, and depravity, and sin, and corruption; but sovereign mercy comes to them just as they lie there rotting in heaps of ruin, and rescues them by effectual grace.

**II.** In the second place, we desire to describe HOW THE LORD RAISES THEM FROM IT.

He lifteth the needy out of the dunghill. It is a dead lift, and none but an eternal arm could do it. It is a feat of omnipotence to lift a sinner out of his natural degradation; it is all done by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word, filled with the energy of God. The operation is somewhat on this wise. When the Lord begins to deal with the needy sinner, the first lift he gives him raises his desires. The man is not satisfied to be where he was, and what he Was. That dunghill he had not perceived to be so foul as it really is; and the first sign of spiritual life is horror at his lost condition, and an anxious desire to escape from it. Dear hearer, have you advanced so far as this? Do you feel that all is wrong with you? And do you desire to be saved from your present state? So long as you can say, "It is well with me," and boast that you are no worse than others, I have no hope of you. God does not lift those up who are lifted up already; but when you begin to feel that your present state is one of degradation and ruin, and that you fain would escape from it, then the Lord has put the lever under you, he has begun to raise you up. The next sign generally is that to such a man sin loses all sweetness. When the Lord begins to work with you even before you find Christ to the joy of your soul, you will find the joy of sin to have departed. A quickened soul that feels the weight of sin, cannot find pleasure in it. Although without faith in Jesus, the evil of sin cannot clearly and evangelically be perceived, yet the conscience of an awakened sinner, perceiving the terribly defiling character of some sins, compels him to give them up. The alehouse is abandoned; the scorner's seat is given up; the lusts of the flesh are forsaken: and though this does not lift the sinner from the dunghill, yet it is a sign that the Lord has begun his work of grace. When sin grows bitter, mercy grows sweet. O my friend, may the Lord wean thee from the world's sweet poisons, and bring thee to the true pleasures which are hidden in Christ Jesus. It is another blessed sign that the man is being lifted from the dunghill, when he begins to feel that his own self-righteousness is no assistance to him; when, having prayed, he looks upon his prayers with repentance, and having gone to God's house, rests not in the outward form. It is well when a man is cut off entirely from all confidence in himself. He may be on the dunghill still, but I am sure he will not be there long, for when thou and thyself have quarrelled, God and thyself begin to be at peace; when thou canst see through that cobweb righteousness of thine, which once seemed to be such a fair silken garment; when thou canst hate that counterfeit coin which once seemed to glitter and to chink like the true gold; when thou art plunged in the ditch, and thine own clothes abhor thee, it is not long before thou shalt be saved with

an everlasting salvation. Now comes the true lift from off the dunghill. That poor, guilty, lost, worthless one, hears of Jesus Christ that he came into the world to save sinners: that poor soul looks to him with a look which means, "Lord, thou art my last resort! If thou dost not save me, I must perish; and thou must save me altogether, for I cannot help thee. I cannot give a thread with which to finish thy perfect righteousness. If it be unfinished, I cannot contribute one farthing to make up my own ransom: if thou hast not completely ransomed me, then thy redemption is of no service to me. Lord, I am a drowning, sinking man, I grasp thee as I sink; O save me for thy mercy's sake!"

*"All my help on thee is stayed;  
All my trust from thee I bring:  
Cover my defenceless head  
With the shadow of thy wing."*

When a soul gets there, then it is off the dunghill; for the moment a sinner thus trusts Jesus Christ, his sins cease to be; God has drawn his pen through them all; they are gone. He is not guilty in the sight of God any longer: he stands acquitted through the atonement, and justified through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He is a saved man. He may rise from his sackcloth and ashes, and walking at large, may sing of the blood-bought mercy which has set him completely free. Thus by the gift of the only-begotten Son, brought personally to the heart, the Lord raises his elect ones from their ruined state; he makes them see it to be a dunghill; makes them feel that they cannot get off of themselves; points them to Christ; leads them to trust his precious blood, and so they are delivered.

### **III.** The third point was, HOW HE RAISES THEM UP.

It is a blessed thing to be saved from degradation, but praise be to Jehovah, he does not stop there. The Lord does nothing by halves. Oh! the lengths and breadths of love! When he has come right down to where we are it is only half his journey: it remains for him to bear us right up to where he is. Oh! it is a blessed thing to be taken off the dunghill, even if our lot were that of hired servants in our Father's house; but this does not satisfy the infinite heart of Jehovah: he will lift his people up above all common-place joys, he will take them right up, up, up as on eagles' wings till he sets them in the place of princes, and makes them to reign with him. Now let us have a few minutes' consideration of how our blessed Lord lifts his people up from the common level of humanity to make them rank with princes.



In the first place, they are lifted up by complete justification. Every Christian here this morning, whatever may have been his past life, is at this instant perfect in the sight of God through Jesus Christ. The spotless righteousness of Christ is imputed to that sinner believing in him, so that he stands, this morning, “accepted in the beloved.” Now, beloved, weigh this, turn it over, and meditate upon it. Poor, needy, but believing sinner, you are as accepted before God at this present time through Christ Jesus as if you never had sinned, as if you had done and performed every work of his most righteous law without the slightest failure. Is not this sitting among princes? Complete justification furnishes the believer with a throne as safe as it is lofty; as happy as it is glorious. Ah! ye scions of imperial houses, some of you know nothing of this. This is a note which many an emperor could never sing, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” Speak of sitting in pavilions of pleasure, or on divans of state, with nobles, princes, kings, Caesars — why the figure flags, it falls short of the mark, for the state of the soul completely justified outshines all this as the sun outshines you glimmering candle.

Take the next step. The children of God who have been taken from the dunghill, many of them enjoy full assurance of faith. They are certain that they are saved; they can say with Job, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” As to whether they are children of God or not, they have no question; the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bears witness with their spirit that they are born of God. Christ is their elder Brother, God is their Father, and they breathe the filial spirit by which they cry, “Abba, Father!” they know their own security; they are convinced that neither “things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.” I ask every one of understanding heart, whether this is not sitting among princes? Beloved, I would not give a farthing for a prince’s throne, but I would give all I had a thousand times told, if I might always enjoy full assurance of faith; for the full assurance of faith is a better joy than Shushan’s palace of lilies, or Solomon’s house of the forest of Lebanon, could ever yield. A sense of divine lovingkindness is better than life itself: it is a young heaven maturing below, to be fully developed above. To know that my Beloved is mine, and that I am his, and that he loved me and gave himself for me, this is far better than to be heir-apparent to a scone of empires.

We go further, the children of God, favored by divine grace, are permitted to have interviews with Jesus Christ. Like Enoch, we walk with God. Just as a child walks with his father, putting his hand into his father's hand, looking up with loving eye, so the chosen people walk with their Father God most lovingly, confidingly, familiarly; talking to him, telling him their griefs, and hearing from his gracious mouth the secrets of his love. They are a happy people, for they have communion with Jesus of a more intimate and tender sort than even angels know. We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; we are married unto him; he has betrothed us unto himself in faithfulness and in righteousness; we are dearer to himself than his own flesh and blood-that he gave to die-and none of us shall ever perish, neither shall any take us out of his hand. Now is not this sitting among princes? Princes! princes! we look down upon your pomp from the eminence on which grace has placed us! Wear your crowns! put on your purple! deck yourselves in all your regal pomp! but when our souls can sit with Jesus, and reign as kings and priests with him, your splendours are not worth a thought. Communion with Jesus is a richer gem than ever glittered in imperial diadem. Union with the Lord is a coronet of beauty outshining all the crowns of earth.

Nor is this all: the elect of God, in addition to receiving complete justification, full assurance, and communion with Christ, are favored with the Holy Spirit's sanctification. God the Holy Spirit dwells in every Christian; however humble he may be, he is a walking temple in which resides deity. God the Holy Spirit dwelleth in us, and we in him; and that Spirit sanctifieth the daily actions of the Christian, so that he does everything as unto God; if he lives it is to Christ, and if he dies it is gain. O beloved, it is indeed to sit among princes when you feel the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. O my God, if I might always feel thy Spirit overcoming my corruption and constraining my soul to holiness, I would not so much as think of a prince in comparison with my own joy. O my dear brethren and sisters in Jesus Christ, I am sure you can bear witness that when you fall into sin at any time, it brings you very low; you smell that vile dunghill once again, and are ready to die under its fearful noisomeness; but when the Holy Spirit enables you to overcome sin and to live as Christ lived, you do feel that you have a royal standing, and a more than imperial privilege in being sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Moreover, many saints receive, in addition to sanctification, the blessing of usefulness; and, mark the word, every useful man is of princely rank. I am

not exaggerating now, but speaking the sober truth; he is the true prince among men who blesses his fellows. To be able to drop pearls from your lips might make you a prince in a fairy tale, but when those lips bless the souls of men by leading them to Jesus, this is to be a prince in very deed. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to reclaim the fallen, to teach the ignorant, to cheer the desponding, to inspire the wavering, and to conduct saints up to God's right hand, my brethren, this is to wear a lustre which stars and ribbons, orders and distinctions, never could confer. This is the privilege of each one of you, according as the Spirit of God has given you the measure of faith. You, who once did mischief, now subserve the interest of virtue; you, who rendered up your members servants unto unrighteousness, now make those same members servants of righteousness to the praise and glory of God. No courts of sovereigns can bestow such true honors as dwell in holiness, charity, and zeal.

And once more, God lifts Iris people up in another sense: while he gives them sanctification and usefulness, he also anoints them with joy. Olin! the joy of being a Christian! I know the world's idea is, that we are a miserable people. If you read the pages of history, the writers speak of the gay cavaliers as being men of high spirit and overflowing joy; but the poor Puritans, what a wretched set they were, blaspheming Christmas-day, abhorring games and sports, and going about the world, looking so terribly miserable, that it were a pity they should go to hell, for they had enough of torment here! Now this talk is all untrue, or at best is a gross caricature. Hypocrites, then as now, did wear a long face and a rueful countenance, but there were to be found among the Puritans hosts of men whose holy mirth and joy were not to be equalled, nay, not to be dreamed of, or understood by those poor grinning fools who fluttered round the heartless rake whose hypocrisies had lifted him to the English throne. The cavaliers' mirth was the crackling of thorns under a pot, but a deep and unquenchable joy dwelt in the breasts of those men

*Who trampled on the throng of the haughty and the strong,  
Who sate in the high places, and slew the saints of God."*

Oh! far above the laughter of the gallants of the court, was the mighty and deep joy of those who rode from the victorious field singing unto the Lord who had made them triumph gloriously. They called them "Ironsides," and such they were, but they had hearts of steel, which while they flinched not in the day of danger, forgot not to flash with joy even as steel glitters in the

shining of the sun. Believe me, however, whatever they were, that we who trust in Jesus are the happiest of people-not constitutionally, for some of us have great depression of spirits, not always circumstantially, for some of us are much tried and are brought to the utter depths of poverty, but inwardly, truly, really, our heart's joy, believe us, is not to be excelled. I would not stand here to lie for twice the Indies, but I will speak the truth: if I had to die like a dog to-morrow I would not change places with any man beneath the courts of heaven for joy and peace of mind; for to be a Christian and know it, to drink deep of that cup. to know your election, to understand your calling, I do assure you yields more peace and bliss in one ten minutes than will be found in one hundred years in all the courts of sin, though wantonness should run riot, and pleasure should know no license.

*“Solid joy and lasting pleasure  
None but Zion's children know.”*

So when I read the text that he sets us among princes, I think little of the figure, it halts, it lags, for the Lord puts us far above all earthly princes; and were it not for the next sentence I would even that the figure broke down altogether, but the next clause makes it right, “even the princes of his people”—this puts soul and force—these are princes of another blood, these are peers of another realm, and among such God sets his people.

**IV.** To conclude, we have to notice in the last place, WHERE IT IS THAT OUR LORD SETS HIS PEOPLE.

“Among princes,” we are told. We have already dwelt upon the same thought, but we will examine another side of it. “Among princes,” is the place of select society. They do not admit everybody into that charmed circle. Among an aristocracy, the poor plebeian must not venture. The blue blood runs in rather a narrow channel, and it cannot be expected that the common crimson should be allowed to invigorate the languid current. The true Christian lives in very select society. Listen! “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Speak of select society, there is none like this! We are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood. “We are not come unto Mount Sinai, but we are come unto the blood of sprinkling and unto the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.” This is select society. Next they have courtly audience: the prince may be expected to have admittance to royalty when common people like ourselves must stand afar off. Now the child of God has free access to the royalty of heaven. Our

courtly privileges are of the highest order. Listen! “For through Him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father.” “Let us come boldly,” says the apostle, “to the throne of the heavenly grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” We have courtly audience and peculiarly select society. Next to this it is supposed that among princes there is abundant wealth, but what is the wealth of princes compared with the riches of believer’s? for “all things are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Among princes, again, there dwells peculiar power. A prince has influence he wields a scepter in his own domain: and “He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign for ever and ever.” We are not kings of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and yet we have a triple dominion; we reign over spirit, soul, and body. We reign over the united kingdom of time and eternity; we reign in this world, and we shall reign in the world that is yet to come: for we shall reign for ever and ever. Princes, again, have special honor. Everyone in the crowd desires to gaze upon a prince, and would be delighted to do him service. Let him have the first position in the empire; he is a prince of the blood, and is to be had in esteem and respect. Beloved, hear ye his word: “He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” so that we share the honor of Christ as we share his cross. Paul was taken from the dunghill of persecution, but he is not second to any in glory; and you, though you may have been the chief of sinners, shall fare none the worse when he cometh in his kingdom; but as he owned you on earth, and redeemed you with his precious blood, so will he own you in the future state, and make you sit with him and reign among princes, world without end. May the Lord bless these words for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON***

***-1 Samuel 2:1-10; Psalm 113.***

# SIMEON.

NO. 659

BY C. H. SPURGEON

“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.”-  
Luke 2:25.

WHAT a biography of a man! How short, and yet how complete! We have seen biographies so prolix, that full one half is nonsense, and much of the other half too vapid to be worth reading. We have seen large volumes spun out of men's letters. Writing desks have been broken open, and private diaries exposed to the world. Now-a-days, if a man is a little celebrated, his signature, the house in which he was born, the place where he dines, and everything else, is thought worthy of public notice. So soon as he is departed this life, he is embalmed in huge folios, the profit of which rests mainly, I believe, with the publishers, and not with the readers. Short biographies are the best, which give a concise and exact account of the whole man. What do we care about what Simeon did-where he was born, where he was married, what street he used to walk through, or what coloured coat he wore? We have a very concise account of his history, and that is enough. His “name was Simeon;” he lived “in Jerusalem;” “the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.”

Beloved, that is enough of a biography for any one of us. If, when we die, so much as this can be said of us-our name-our business, “waiting for the consolation of Israel”-our character, “just and devout”-our companionship, having the Holy Ghost upon us-that will be sufficient to hand us down not to time, but to eternity, memorable amongst the just, and estimable amongst all them that are sanctified.

Pause awhile, I beseech you, and contemplate Simeon's character. The Holy Ghost thought it worthy of notice, since he has put a “behold” in the sentence. “Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was

Simeon." He doth not say, "Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was king Herod;" he doth not say, "Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, who was high priest;" but, "Behold!"-turn aside here, for the sight is so rare, you may never see such a thing again so long as you live; here is a perfect marvel; "Behold," there was one man in Jerusalem who was "just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him." His character is summed up in two words-"just and devout." "Just"-that is his character before men. "Devout"-that is his character before God. He was "just." Was he a father? He did not provoke his children to anger, lest they should be discouraged. Was he a master? He gave unto his servants that which was just and equal, knowing that he also had his Master in heaven. Was he a citizen? He rendered obedience unto the powers that then were, submitting himself to the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake. Was he a merchant? He overreached in no transaction, but providing things honest in the sight of all men, he honored God in his common business habits. Was he a servant? Then he did not render eye-service, as a man-pleaser, but in singleness of heart he served the Lord. If, as is very probable, he was one of the teachers of the Jews, then he was faithful; he spoke what he knew to be the Word of God, although it might not be for his gain, and would not, like the other shepherds, turn aside to speak error, for the sake of filthy lucre. Before men he was just. But that is only half a good man's character. There are many who say, "I am just and upright; I never robbed a man in my life; I pay twenty shillings in the pound; and if anybody can find fault with my character, let him speak. Am I not just? But as for your religion," such a one will say, "I do not care about it; I think it cant." Sir, you have only one feature of a good man, and that the smallest. You do good towards man, but not towards God; you do not rob your fellow, but you rob your Maker. "Will a man rob God?" Yes, and think far less of it than he would if he robbed man. He who robs man is called a villain; he who robs God is often called a gentleman. Simeon had both features of a Christian. He was a "just man," and he was also "devout." Mark, it does not say he was a just man and religious. A man may be very religious, and yet he may not be devout. Religion, you know, as the term is used, consists very much in outward observances; godliness and devotion consist in the inward life and action arising from the inner spring of true consecration. It does not say here that Simeon was a religious man, for that he might have been, and yet have been a Pharisee, a hypocrite, a mere professor. But no; he was a "devout" man. He valued the "outward and visible sign," but he possessed the "inward and spiritual

grace.” Therefore he is called “a just man and devout.” “Behold!” says the Holy Ghost. “Behold!” for it is a rarity! Come ye here, ye Christians of the present day! Many of you are just, but ye are not devout; and some of you pretend to be devout, but ye are not just. The just and the devout together make up the perfection of the godly man. Simeon was “a just man and devout.”

But now, leaving the character of Simeon as a man, we shall endeavor to expound his blessed hope as a believer. To this end we ask your attention, first, to the expectation—he was “waiting for the consolation of Israel;” secondly, the fulfillment; that which he waited for, he saw; and when he found Jesus, he said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace;” and thirdly, the explanation of that fulfillment, or how it is that the Lord Jesus is the consolation of Israel.

**I.** First, then, SIMEON’S EXPECTATION. He was “waiting for the consolation of Israel.” This was the position of all the saints of God, from the first promise, even to the time of Simeon. Poor old Simeon had now become grey-headed; it is very possible that he had passed the usual period allotted to man’s life; but he did not wish to die; he wished for “the consolation of Israel.” He did not wish that the tabernacle of his body might be dissolved, but he did hope that, through the chinks of that old battered tabernacle of his, he might be able to see the Lord. Like the hoary-headed Christian of our times, he did not desire to die, but he did desire to “be with Christ, which was far better.” All the saints have waited for Jesus. Our mother Eve waited for the coming of Christ; when her first son was born, she said, “I have gotten a man from the Lord.” True she was mistaken in what she said: it was Cain, and not Jesus. But by her mistake we see that she cherished the blessed hope. That Hebrew patriarch, who took his son, his only son, to offer him for a burnt offering, expected the Messiah, and well did he express his faith when he said, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb.” He who once had a stone for his pillow, the trees for his curtains, the heaven for his canopy, and the cold ground for his bed, expected the coming of Jesus, for he said on his death-bed—“Until Shiloh come.” The law-giver of Israel, who was “king in Jeshurun,” spake of him, for Moses said, “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear.” David celebrated him in many a prophetic song—the Anointed of God, the King of Israel; him to whom all kings shall bow, and all nations call him blessed. How frequently does he in his Psalms sing about “my Lord”? “The LORD said unto my



Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." But need we stop to tell you of Isaiah, who spake of his passion, and "saw his glory"? of Jeremiah, of Ezekiel, of Daniel, of Micah, of Malachi, and of all the rest of the prophets, who stood with their eyes strained, looking through the dim mists of futurity, until the weeks of prophecy should be fulfilled-until the sacred day should arrive, when Jesus Christ should come in the flesh? They were all waiting for the consolation of Israel. And, now, good old Simeon, standing on the verge of the period when Christ would come, with expectant eyes looked out for him. Every morning he went up to the temple, saying to himself, "Perhaps he will come to-day." Each night when he went home he bent his knee, and said, "O Lord, come quickly; even so, come quickly." And yet, peradventure, that morning he went to the temple, little thinking, perhaps, the hour was at hand when he should see his Lord there; but there he was, brought in the arms of his mother, a little babe; and Simeon knew him. "Lord," said he, "now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." "Oh," cries one, "but we cannot wait for the Savior now!" No, beloved, in one sense we cannot, for he is come already. The poor Jews are waiting for him. They will wait in vain now for his first coming, that having passed already. Waiting for the Messiah was a virtue in Simeon's day: it is the infidelity of the Jews now, since the Messiah is come. Still there is a high sense in which the Christian ought to be every day waiting for the consolation of Israel. I am very pleased to see that the doctrine of the second advent of Christ is gaining ground everywhere. I find that the most spiritual men in every place are "looking for," as well as "hastening unto," the coming of our Lord and Savior. I marvel that the belief is not universal, for it is so perfectly scriptural. We are, we trust, some of us, in the same posture as Simeon. We have climbed the staircase of the Christian virtues, from whence we look for that blessed hope, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Besides, if we do not believe in the second coming, every Christian waits for the consolation of Israel, at times when he misses the sweet consoling experience. I speak to some of you, perhaps, who are feeling that you have lost the light of the Lord's face lately. You have not seen his blessed countenance; you have not heard his love-speaking voice; you have not listened to the tender accents of his lips; and you are longing for him. You are like Simeon, waiting for the consolation of Israel. He will come; though he tarries, he will come. Christ does not leave his people entirely. What,

though he hide his face? He will come again. The child saith the swallows are dead, because they skim the purple sea. Wait thou, O child, and the swallows shall come back again! The foolish one thinketh that the sun has died out, because he is hidden behind the clouds. Stop for a little season, and the sun shall come again, and thou shalt know that he was brewing behind dark clouds the April shower, mother to the sweet May flowers. Jesus is gone for a little while; but he will come again. Christian! be thou waiting for the consolation of Israel!

I hope, too, I have in this place some poor seeking sinner who is waiting for the like consolation. Sinner! you will not have to wait for ever. It is very seldom Christ Jesus keeps poor sinners waiting long. Sometimes he does. He answers them not a word; but then it is to try their faith. Though he keeps them waiting, he will not send them away wanting; he will be sure to give them mercies, sooner or later. "Though the promise tarry, wait for it," and thou shalt find it yet, to thy soul's salvation. Child of God! has not thy Father come to thee yet? Cry for him! cry for him! Thy Father will come: Nothing fetches the parent to the child, like the child's cry. Cry, little one, cry! Thou who hast but little faith. "Ah! but," thou sayest, "I am too weak to cry." Did you never notice that the little one sometimes cries so very low, that when you are sitting in the parlour with the mother, you do not hear it? Up she gets; there is the dear child crying upstairs; and off she goes. She can bear it, though you cannot; because it is her child that cries. Cry, little one; let thy prayer go up to heaven. Though thy minister doth not hear it; though unbelief says no one can hear it, there is a God in heaven who knoweth the cry of the penitent, who "healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Sweet posture! to be waiting for the consolation of Israel!

**II.** This brings us to the second point-THE FULFILMENT OF THIS EXPECTATION. Did Simeon wait in vain? Ah! no; he waited for consolation, and he had the consolation for which he waited. Oh! I can picture Simeon's frame! How altered it was that morning! He went probably an old man limping up to the temple, his face sad with disappointment; his eyes dark with distress, because he had not found that for which he looked. He wanted to see, and could not see; he desired to know, and he did not know; sometimes, in his unbelieving moments, he thought that, like the prophets and kings, he should wait long, and seek, but never find. Do you not think you see him, when he held the babe in his arms? Why, the old man did not then want his staff to lean on; down it went, and both his arms

grasped the child. He may have trembled a little; but the mother of Jesus was not afraid to trust her child to him. How young he felt! As young as when ten years ago he walked with light foot through the streets of Jerusalem. Scarce in heaven did old Simeon feel more happy than he did at that moment when he clasped the babe in his arms! Do you not think you see him? Joy is flashing from his eyes; his lips speak sonnets, which burst out like the chorus of immortals, when he says, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Ask now, was he disappointed in the object of his search? Was Jesus equal to his expectations, "the consolation of Israel"? Yes, we answer. We dare any person here, or in the wide world, to deny what we now assert—there certainly is sweet and blessed consolation in Jesus, for all the people of God. I do not know whether any have ever been fools enough to say the gospel is not comforting. I do not think they have. Most of them have said, "It is a very good religion for old women and imbeciles, for sick people and death-beds." The worst of men admit that religion is a very comfortable thing. Or if they do not admit it, they have the lesson to learn. Come, deist or sceptic, whichever thou art, let me point thee to believers in the time of persecution. Look thou upon that face of Stephen, already lighted up with heaven's own glory, whilst they are stoning him. Let me bring thee down through the ages of the rack and the wheel, the times of stocks and inquisitions; let me tell thee of martyrs who clapped their hands in the flames, and while their limbs were burning at the stake, could yet sing a carol, as if it were Christmas-day in their hearts, though it was Ash-day to their bodies. How often you find those who are foremost in suffering, foremost in joy! When men laid iron chains on their arms, God put golden chains of honor on their necks. When men heaped reproaches on their names, God heaped comforts on their souls. The peace-cry, like the blood-cry, let it never be hushed. The Christian race, by our martyrs and confessors, show the wide, wide world, that there is a joy in religion that can quench the flame, snatch torture from the rack, the torment from the wheel, that can sing in the prison, that can laugh cheerfully in the stocks, and make our free and unimprisoned hearts burst through the bars of the dungeon, and fly upwards, chanting psalms to our God. Behold the consolation of Israel!

But the infidel replies, "These are excitable moments. At such times persons are stimulated beyond their wonted strength. Your examples are

not fair." Come thou here, unbeliever, and let me show thee Christians in ordinary life—not martyrs, not confessors, not men with blood-red crowns on their brows, but common men like thyself. Seest thou that husband? He has just returned from the funeral of his wife. Dost thou mark his countenance? He says, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Couldst thou do that? Seest thou that mother? Her child lies dead; and looking on it she says, "He hath done all things well. It is hard to part with it; but I will resign it to my God." Couldst thou do that, infidel? Seest thou yonder merchant? Ruin has overtaken him in moment: he is reduced to poverty. Mark you how he lifts his hands to heaven, and cries, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Couldst thou do the like, infidel? Nay, thou couldst not; but there is consolation in Israel. I am half ashamed of some of you, my brethren, who do not bear trouble well, because you are not an honor to your religion, as you ought to be. Ye should learn, if possible, to say, like Job—"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." "Alas!" say you, "it is easy enough for you to tell us so, but not quite so easy to practice." I grant yon that; but then it is the glory of the gospel that it makes us do things that are not easy. If it be a bard thing, so much the more honor to God; so much the more virtue in the Scriptures: that by their blessed influence, and by the aid of the Holy Ghost, they enable us to bear trials under which others sink. But a little while ago I heard of an ungodly man who had a pious wife. They had but one daughter, a fair and lovely thing; she was laid on a bed of sickness: the father and mother stood beside the bed; the solemn moment came when she must die; the father leaned over, and put his arm round her, and wept hot tears upon his child's white brow; the mother stood there too, weeping her very soul away. The moment that child was dead, the father began to tear his hair, and curse himself in his despair; misery had got bold upon him; but as he looked towards the foot of the bed, there stood his wife; she was not raving, she was not cursing; she wiped her eyes, and said, "I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me." The unbeliever's heart for a moment rose in anger, for he imagined that she was a stoic. But the tears flowed down her cheeks too. He saw that though she was a weak and feeble woman, she could bear sorrow better than he could, and he threw his arms round her neck, and said, "Ah! wife, I have often laughed at your religion; I will do so no more. There is

much blessedness in this resignation. Would God that I had it too!" "Yes," she might have answered, "I have the consolation of Israel." There is-hear it, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!-there is consolation in Israel. That dear sister, whom I mentioned at the beginning of this service, was one of the noblest pictures of resignation I have ever seen. When I went to see her, I could only describe her position like this: she was sitting on the banks of the Jordan, singing, with her feet in the water, longing to cross the river. "Ah! pastor," she said, when I came in, "how have you fed my soul, and made my young days come over again; I did not think the Lord would give me such blessed seasons just before he took me home; but now I must bid you good-bye, for I am going up to my Jesus, and I shall be with him for ever." I shall not forget how placidly she looked. Ah! it is sweet to see a Christian die; it is the noblest thing on earth- the dismissal of a saint from his labor to his reward, from his conflicts to his triumphs. The gorgeous pageantry of princes is as nothing. The glory of the setting sun is not to be compared with the heavenly coruscations which illumine the soul as it fades from the organs of bodily sense, to be ushered into the august presence of the Lord. When dear Haliburton died, he said, "I am afraid I shall not be able to bear another testimony to my Master, but in order to show you that I am peaceful, and still resting on Christ, I will hold my hands up;" and just before he died, he held both his hands up, and clapped them together, though he could not speak. Have you ever read of the death-bed of Payson? I cannot describe it to you; it was like the flight of a seraph. John Knox, that brave old fellow, when he came to die, sat up in his bed, and said, "Now the hour of my dissolution is come; I have longed for it many a-day; but I shall be with my Lord in a few moments." Then he fell back on his bed and died. We have many others, of whom I might tell you; such as that blessed Janeway, who said, "O that I had lips to tell you a thousandth part of that which I now feel; you will never know the worth of Jesus till you come to your death-bed, and then you will find him a blessed Christ, when you want him most." O unbeliever, stand where death is at work; and if thou lovest not the righteous in their life, thou wilt say none the less like Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Such is our holy religion-a sweet and blessed consolation.

**III.** And this brings us to the third point, which is THE EXPLANATION OF THIS FACT: to show to all men, and to show to you especially, that there is consolation, and to explain how it is.

In the first place, there is consolation in the doctrines of the Bible. I like a doctrinal religion. I do not believe in the statement of some people, that they have no creed. A man says, for instance, "I am not a Calvinist, and I am not an Arminian, I am not a Baptist, I am not a Presbyterian, I am not an Independent." He says he is liberal. But this is only the license he claims for his own habit of disagreeing with everybody. He is one of that sort of people whom we generally find to be the most bigoted themselves, and least tolerant of others. He follows himself; and so belongs to the smallest denomination in the world. I do not believe that charity consists in giving up our denominational distinctions. I think there is a "more excellent way." Even those who despise not faith, though they almost sacrifice it to their benevolence, will sometimes say, "Well, I don't belong to any of your sects and parties." There was a body of men once, who came out from all branches of the Christian Church, with the hope that everybody else of true heart would follow them. The result, however, has been, that they have only made another denomination, distinct alike in doctrine and discipline. I believe in creeds, if they are based on Scripture. They may not secure unity of sentiment, but on the whole they promote it, for they serve as landmarks, and show us the points at which many turn aside. Every man must have a creed if he believes anything. The greater certainty he feels that it is true, the greater his own satisfaction. In doubts, darkness, and distrust, there can be no consolation. The vague fancies of the sceptic, as he muses over images and apprehensions too shapeless and airy to be incorporated into any creed, may please for awhile, but it is the pleasure of a dream. I believe that there is consolation for Israel in the substance of faith, and the evidence of things not seen. Ideas are too ethereal to lay hold of. The anchor we have is sure and steadfast. I thank God that the faith I have received can be moulded into a creed, and can be explained with words so simple, that the common people can understand it, and be comforted by it.

Then look at the doctrines themselves-the doctrines of the Bible. What well-springs of consolation they are! How consolatory the doctrine of election to the Israel of God! To some men it is repulsive. But show me the gracious soul that hath come to put his trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel. "Chosen in Christ," will be a sweet stanza in his song of praise. To think that ere the hills were formed, or the channels of the sea were scooped out, God loved me; that from everlasting to everlasting his mercy is upon his people. Is not that a consolation? Ye who do not believe

in election, go ye and fish in other waters; but in this great sea there be mighty fishes. If ye could come here, ye would find rich consolation. Or come ye again to the sweet doctrine of redemption. What consolation is there, beloved, to know that you are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Not the mock redemption taught by some people, which pretends that the ransom is paid, but the souls that are ransomed may notwithstanding be lost. No, no; a positive redemption which is effectual for all those for whom it is made. Oh! to think that Christ has so purchased you with his blood, that you cannot be lost. Is there not consolation in that doctrine-the doctrine of redemption? Think, again, of the doctrine of atonement-that Christ Jesus has borne all your sins in his own body on the tree; that he hath put away your sins by the sacrifice of himself. There is nought like believing in full atonement; that all our sins are washed away and carried into the depths of the sea. Is there not consolation there? What sayest thou, worldling, if thou couldst know thyself elect of God the Father, if thou couldst believe thyself redeemed by his only begotten Son, if thou knewest that for thy sins there was a complete ransom paid, would not that be a consolation to you? Perhaps you answer, "No." That is because you are a natural man, and do not discern spiritual things. The spiritual man will reply, "Consolation? ay, sweet as honey to these lips; yea, sweeter than the honeycomb to my heart are those precious doctrines of the grace of God."

Let us pass on to consolatory promises.

Oh! how sweet to the soul in distress are the promises of Jesus! For every condition there is a promise; for every sorrow there is a cordial; for every wound there is a balm; for every disease there is a medicine. If we turn to the Bible, there are promises for all cases. Now let me appeal to you, my friends. Have you not felt how consoling the promises are to you in seasons of adversity and hours of anguish? Do you not remember some occasion, when your spirits were so broken down that you felt as if you never could have struggled through your woes and sorrows, had not some sweet and precious word of God come to your help? Minister of the gospel, dost thou not remember how often thou hast feared that thy message would be of no effect? But thou hast heard thy Master whisper, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Sunday-school teacher, have not you said, "I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nought"? And have you not then heard Jesus say, "My Word shall not return unto me void"? Mourner, you have lost a near relation, have you not

heard Jesus then say, "All things work together for good"? Softly wipe that tear away, O widow: would not thy heart have broken if it had not been for the assurance, "Thy Maker is thy husband"? Fatherless child, what would have become of you if you had not turned to the consoling promise, "Leave thy fatherless children, and let thy widows trust in me"? But why need I tell you, Christian, that there are consoling promises in the Bible? You know there are. I would not sell a leaf of the Bible for a world, nor would I change a promise of it for stars made of gold.

***"Holy Bible, book divine;  
Precious treasure! thou art mine."***

No such comfort can I find as that I derive from thee! Thou art heaven on earth to me, blessed Bible! Verily, if we wait for Christ, we shall find that in his gospel there is consolation for Israel.

Not only have we consolatory promises, and consolatory doctrines, but we have consolatory influences in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. There are times, my friends, when all the promises in the world are of no use to us—when all the doctrines in the world would be of no avail, unless we had a hand to apply them to us. There lies a poor man; he has been wounded in battle. In yonder hospital there is a bundle of liniment. The blood is flowing; he has lost an arm; he has lost a leg. There are plenty at the hospital who can bind up his wounds, and plenty of medicines for all that he now suffers. But what use are they? He may lie forlorn on the battle-field and die unfriended: unless there is some one to bring the ambulance to carry him to the place, he cannot reach it himself. He lifts himself up on that one remaining arm, but he falls down faint; the blood is flowing freely, and his strength is ebbing with it. Oh! then it is not the liniment he cares for; it is not the ointment; it is some one who can bring those things to him. Ay, and if the remedies were all put there by his side, it may be, he is so faint and sick that he can do nothing for his own relief. Now, in the Christian religion, there is something more than prescriptions for our comfort. There is one, even the Spirit of truth, who takes of the things of Jesus, and applies them to us. Think not that Christ hath merely put joys within our reach that we may get for ourselves, but he comes and puts the joys inside our hearts. The poor, sick, way-worn pilgrim, not only finds there is something to strengthen him to walk, but he is borne on eagles' wings. Christ does not merely help him to walk, but carries him, and says, "I will bind up your wounds; I will come to you myself." O poor soul, is not



this joy for you? You have been often told by your minister to believe in Christ, but you say you cannot. You have often been invited to come to Jesus, but you feel you cannot come. Yes; but the best of the gospel is, that when a sinner cannot come to Christ, Christ can come to him. When the poor soul feels that it cannot get near Christ, Christ will be sure to draw him. O Christian, if thou art to-night laboring under deep distresses, thy Father does not give thee promises and then leave thee. The promises he has written in the Word he will grave on your heart, He will manifest his love to you, and by his blessed Spirit, which bloweth like the wind, take away your cares and troubles. Be it known unto thee, O mourner, that it is God's prerogative to wipe every tear from the eye of his people. I shall never forget hearing John Gough say, in his glowing manner- "Wipe away tears! That is God's prerogative; and yet," said he, "I have done it. When the drunkard has been reclaimed, the tears of a wife have been wiped from her cheeks." O beloved, it is a blessed thing to wipe others' tears away; but "Lo, these things worketh God oftentimes with men." He not only gives you the handkerchief, but wipes your eyes for you; he not only gives you the sweet wine, but holds it to your lips and pours it into your mouth. The good Samaritan did not say, "Here is the wine, and here is the oil for you;" but what did he do? He poured in the oil and the wine. He did not say, "Now, mount the beast"-but he set him on it, and took him to the inn. Glorious gospel! that provides such things for poor lost ones-comes after us when we cannot come after it-brings us grace when we cannot win grace-here is grace in the giving as well as the gift. Happy people, to be thus blessed of God! Simeon "waited for the consolation of Israel," and he found it. May you find it too!

Two short addresses to two sorts of people; and then we shall have done. To you, ye followers of Jesus, let me speak. I have one thing to ask of you. With such a Father who loveth you-with such a Savior who hath given himself for you, and doth give himself to you-with such a good Spirit to abide with you, instruct you, and comfort you- with such a gospel-what now doth bow you down? What mean those wrinkled brows? What mean those flowing tears? What mean those aching hearts? What means that melancholy carriage? "What mean they?" say you; "Why, I have troubles." But, brother, hast thou forgotten the exhortation of the Lord? "Cast thy burden on the Lord; he will sustain thee;" "He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Do, brethren, do try to be as glad as you can. Rejoice evermore. A cheerful Christian recommends religion. We usually

look in the window of a tradesman's shop to see what he sells; and persons very frequently look into our faces to ascertain what are the thoughts of our heart. Alas! that they should see any of us looking habitually sad. Some persons think that sour faces and sombre garments are fitting emblems of sanctity. They would count it wicked to laugh, or if they were to do such a thing as smile in chapel, they would think that they had committed an unpardonable sin, though I never saw any law against that yet. All that is in us should bless his holy name, from the most playful fancy to the sublimest reverie. Ye need not emulate those who, to appear righteous, disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Let me beg of you, Christian, when you fast, to be of a cheerful countenance, that you appear not unto men to fast. Be you never so sad, try and keep your sadness to yourself. Do not let people hear you murmur, lest they should say, "Look at that Christian, he is weak as we are." You have heard the old fiction, that Jesus Christ never laughed or smiled. It was brought forward at a friend's, where I was once staying. There was a little child in the room, who when she heard it, ran up to her father, and said, "Papa, that gentleman did not tell the truth." Of course every one looked at her, and waited for her explanation. "I know that Jesus did, papa," she added, "for the little children loved him; and I don't think they would have loved him if he had never smiled. Did not he say, 'Suffer little children to come unto me,' and he took them up in his arms and gave them his blessing?" Do you think any good Christian could take up a little child without smiling; and if he did not smile, do you think the child would go to him? Jesus Christ did smile. A cheerful face wins honor to religion; a cheerful deportment glorifies God, for lie has said, "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." Be joyful, Christians! Be joyful!

***"Why should the children of a King,  
Go mourning all their days?"***

And now, ere I close, let me appeal to those who have not this consolation Men and brethren, give heed. For Israel there is consolation But for you—what is to become of some of you who have not this consolation at all? Worldly men! whence do you draw your bliss? From the polluted ditches of a filthy world? Soon, alas! will they be emptied; and what will you do then? I see a Christian, There he is! He has been drinking all his life out of the river that makes glad the city of our God. And when he gets to heaven, he goes to the same stream. He drinks, and says, "This water is from the

same fountain that I drank on earth. I drink the same bliss, but draw it nearer the fountain-head than I did before." But methinks I see you who have been drinking out of the black dark, filthy reservoirs of earth, and when you get into eternity, you say, "Where is the stream at which I once slaked my thirst?" You look, and it is gone! Suppose you are a drunkard. Dunkennes was your happiness on earth. Will you be drunk in hell? There it would afford you no gratification. Here the theater was your pastime: will you find a theater in heaven? The songs of foolish lasciviousness were here your delight: will you find such songs in eternity? Will you be able to sing them amidst unutterable burnings? Can you hum those lascivious notes when you are drinking the fearful gall of eternal woe? Oh! surely, no; the things in which you once trusted, and found your peace and comfort, will have gone for ever. Oh! what is your happiness to-night, my friends? Is it a happiness that will last you? Is it a joy that will endure? Or are you holding in your hand an apple of Sodom, and saying, "It is fair, it is passing fair," when you know that you only look on it now, but will have to eat it in eternity? See the man who has that apple in his hand; he puts it to his mouth; he has to masticate it in eternity; and it is ashes-ashes in his lips-ashes between his teeth-ashes in his jaws-ashes for ever-ashes that shall go into his blood, make each vein a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on, his heart an abode of misery, and his whole frame a den of loathsomeness!

Ah! if you have not this consolation of Israel, do you know what ye must have? You must have eternal torment. I have often remarked that the most wicked men hold the doctrine that there is no torment for the body in hell. Riding some time ago in a railway carriage with a man who seemed to have no idea of religion, he said, "I'm as cold as the devil," and repeated the observation several times. I said to him, "He's not at all cold, Sir." "I suppose you are a believer in hell, then?" he replied. "Yes, I am," I said, "because I am a believer in the Bible." "I don't think there is any fire for the body, I don't; I think it is the conscience-remorse of conscience, dismay and despair, and such like; I don't think it has anything to do with the body." And strange enough, many other ungodly men with whom I have spoken on the subject, all seem to be partial to the hell that only deals with the conscience. The reason is this. They do not feel for their soul. They are natural men, who have a natural care about their body, but they think that so long as their body gets off, they will not care for hell at all. Hear this, then, ye ungodly men! Ye care not for the torture of the soul. Hear this-and let there be no metaphor or figure; hear it, for I speak God's

plain language. For the body, too, there is a hell. It is not merely your soul that is to be tortured. What care you for conscience? What care you for memory? What care you for imagination? Hear this, then, drunkard! hear this, man of pleasure! That body which thou pamperest shall lie in pain. It was not a figure which Christ used, when he said, "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off; and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." It was a tongue, sir; it was a flame, sir. It was not a metaphorical tongue, and it was not a metaphorical flame. It was not metaphorical water that he wanted. Real, positive, actual flame tormented the body of that rich Dives in hell. Ah! wicked man, those very hands of yours that now grasp the wine cup, shall grasp the cup of your damnation. The feet that carry you to the theater shall lie in brimstone for ever. The eyes that look on the spectacles of lust-it is no figure, sir-those selfsame eyes shall see murderous spectacles of misery. The selfsame head which has oftentimes here throbbed with headache, shall there beat with pains you have not yet felt. Your heart, for which you care so little, shall become an emporium of miseries, where demons shall empty the scalding boilers of woe. It is not fiction. Read the Bible, and make a fiction of it if you can. There is a fire which knows no abatement, a worm which never dies, a flame unquenchable. As ye go down those stairs, think there is a hell. It is no fiction. Let the old doctrine start out once more, that God hath prepared Tophet of old; the pile thereof is wood and much smoke: the breath of the Lord, like a flame of fire, doth kindle it. There is a hell! O that ye would flee from it! O that by grace ye would escape it! Sodom was no figure: that was real hail of fire from heaven. "Haste," said the angel, "haste!" and put his hand behind the timely-warned fugitive. Man! I am come as an angel from heaven to you to-night, and I would put my hand upon your shoulder, and cry, "Haste! haste! look not behind thee; stay not in all the plain; haste to the mountain, lest thou be consumed!" If thou knowest thy need of a Savior, come thou and trust him. If thou feelest thy want of salvation, come and have it, for it is said, "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." None are excluded hence, but those who do themselves exclude. None are taken in but those whom grace takes in, through the sovereign mercy of our God.

May God receive you to his arms! May sinners be delivered from the pit! May those find, who never yet have sought the consolation of Israel!

Brethren in Christ, I ask your prayers, that God may bless this sermon to the souls of men.

# LIGHT, NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL.

NO. 660

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 12TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON*

**AT CORNWALL ROAD CHAPEL, BAYSWATER.**

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said. Let there be light and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.”- Genesis 1:1-5.

THIS is, no doubt, a literal and accurate account of God’s first day’s work in the creation of the world, but the first creation is not the subject of this morning’s discourse: we would rather direct your minds to the second creation of God. Every man who is saved by grace is a new creation. The great work which Jesus Christ is accomplishing in the world, by the Holy Spirit through the Word, is the making of all things new. We believe the old creation to have been typical of the new, and we shall so use it; may we all be taught of the Lord while so doing.

Observe, dear friends, the state of the world; it is said to have been “without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” Such is the state of every human heart till God the Holy Spirit visits it.

So far as spiritual things are concerned, the human heart is in a state of chaos and disorder. There is no thought of faith, of love, of hope, of obedience; it is spiritually a confused mass of dead sinfulness, in which everything is misplaced. It is void or utterly empty. Search. the human

heart through, and it is true of it as Paul saith, “In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. Over the whole, as in the old creation, a thick darkness reigns, comparable to that of Egypt, a darkness that might be felt. This is true of all men-not of the ignorant in the lowest haunts of London, whose depraved parentage and education have prevented them from knowing divine things-but this is true of those who are trained up under the sound of the gospel, and whose morals are good and exemplary, they are still darkness, naturally, until God the Holy Spirit comes to renew them. In the whole world, whether it be among kings, statesmen, or divines, there is not one who has so much as a spark of spiritual light, unless he has received it from above, and he can only have received it from above through him who is “the true Light which lighteth every man which cometh into the world,” who is enlightened at all. Dark, dark, dark is the whole of humanity: it dwells in the black darkness of sin, and must perish there unless the same divine power which said, “Let there be light,” of old, shall bestow spiritual light.

You observe that the first divine action in connection with the formation and shaping of the world, was this: “The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” The secret work of the Holy Spirit begins in the human heart-we cannot always say precisely when or how. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” In the hearts of God’s chosen ones this Spirit works mysteriously and silently, but most efficaciously. The expression translated “moved upon,” conveys in the original the idea of a bird brooding over its nest. The Holy Ghost mysteriously quickens the dead heart, excites emotions, longings, desires. It may be some of you are feeling his operations this morning. You have not yet received the divine light, but there are workings of the divine energy in your spirit. You are not easy in your present lost estate: you are discontented to be what you now are; you are desirous to enter into God’s marvellous light. For this I thank God, and take it as a hopeful symptom, but I pray that he may, this morning, if it be his gracious will, lead you farther, and make you feel to-day that early operation of divine grace, by which light is given to the darkened soul.

**I.** In considering the text, we shall notice FIRST THE DIVINE FIAT. God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. The Lord himself needeth no light to enable him to discern his Creatures;

*“Darkness and light in this agree,  
Great God they’re both alike to thee.”*

He looked upon the darkness, and resolved that he would transform its shapeless chaos into a fair and lovely world. We shall observe that the work of grace by which light enters the soul, is a need/ut work. God’s plan for the sustaining of vegetable and animal life, rendered light necessary. Light is essential to life. There are few operations which can be carried on in the world at all, without some degree of light, and certainly no heart can be saved without spiritual light. It is light, my brethren, which first shows us our lost estate; for we know nothing of it naturally. We think that we are righteous, that all is well with our souls; but when the divine light comes in, we discover that we are fallen in Adam, and are terribly undone. Naturally we think that we are no worse than others, that if we have offended, our offenses are very venial, and almost deserve to be pardoned; but when light enters, the exceeding sinfulness of sin is discovered. This causes pain and anguish of heart; but that pain and anguish are necessary, in order to bring us to lay hold on Jesus Christ, whom the light next displays to us. No man ever knows Christ till the light of God shines on the cross. You may look at a picture of the bleeding Jesus, you may read the story of his wounds, but you have not seen Christ, so as to be saved by his death, unless the light of his Spirit has revealed him to you as the great substitute for sinners, the surety of the new Covenant, suffering in your room, and place, and stead. You know him not, unless the mysterious light has led you to read these words as your own, “He loved me, and gave himself for me.” Neither our state, nor our sin, nor our Savior, can we see without light. Ye who worship God, but are not converted, are like the men of Athens who worshipped an unknown God. You do not feel him to be a real existence; you do not come near to him, you have no true love to him; you cannot cry, “Abba Father,” you are not made partakers of the divine nature, and you can never be thus brought nigh to God unless heavenly light shall manifest God to you as your God who in eternal purposes chose you to be his, and by the gift of his dear Son has bought you to be his own for ever, The great truths of heaven, hell, and immortality, are not clearly perceived till the light shines on them. You receive them as matter of settled doctrine, because you have been taught them from your youth up; but he who brings life and immortality to light is Christ Jesus, and, without the light, life and immortality are mere names, and not real things to you. Beloved, if we could save men by the application of drops of water, or by giving them bread and wine to eat and



drink; if we were so besotted as to believe that souls could be affected by physical substances and that the hearts of men could be renewed by external observances, there would be no need of light, but ours is a religion which appeals to the understanding, which acts upon the will, which moves the heart, and herein little enough can be done with men while they are in spiritual darkness. They must have light, or else they cannot see; and if they cannot see, they cannot receive; for looking to Jesus is the gospel mode of receiving. So, beloved, the making of light was absolutely necessary in the world, and the creation of God's light in the heart of man is a most necessary work.

Next observe it was a very early work. Light was created on the first day, not on the third, fourth, or sixth, but on the first day; and one of the first operations of the Spirit of God in a man's heart is to give light enough to see his lost estate, and to perceive that he cannot save himself from it but must look elsewhere. Come, dear hearer, have you seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Are you resting upon him as all your salvation and all your desire. Have you light enough to look to him and to be saved, leaving all your own former boastings, nailing them all to his cross, and taking him to be your all in all? It is a very early work of divine grace, I say, to show you that you are a sinner, and to reveal to you that you have a Savior; it is the first day's work, and I have no right to believe myself to be a new creature in God at all unless I have received light enough to know those two great and weighty facts-myself lost in Adam but saved in the second Adam, undone by sin but restored by the Savior's righteousness.

It is well for us to remember that light-giving is a divine work. God said "Let there be light," and there was light. O beloved, how often have I said it and there has been no light whatever! These eyes have often wept over benighted souls, but my glistening tears could not give them a ray of light. Have I not bowed my knee and prayed full many a time for the conversion of men, and though prayer has power because it links man with God, yet in itself it has none, for our prayers for others can do nothing whatever for them till Jehovah himself says "Let there be light." Dear hearer, the Lord must come into distinct and direct contact with your spirit or else your darkness will become the outer darkness of eternal ruin. Speak of what your free will can do, of what your creature ability can do! Alas, these can do nothing whatever for you; they will plunge you deeper and deeper into the blackness of darkness for ever, but into the light of God you never can come and never will come, unless that eternal voice shall say, "Let there

be light." Let us always remember this in preaching the gospel, and never depend upon the man, or upon the word alone, but be this our prayer, "Oh God, do thou work, for thou alone canst do so effectually.

This divine work is wrought by the Word. God did not sit in solemn silence and create the light, but he spake. He said, "Light be," and light was. So the way in which we receive light is by the Word of God. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Christ himself is the essential Word, and the preaching of Christ Jesus is the operative Word. We receive Christ actually when God's power goes with God's Word-then have we light. Hence the necessity of continually preaching the Word of God. If I preach my own word, no light will go with it; but when it is God's Word, then I may expect that light will follow. Oh! to preach Christ's cross. My brethren and sisters, choose no ministry but that which savours much of God's Word, and especially of the Word Christ Jesus. Better to preach one sermon full of Christ, than a thousand in which he shall be left out. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The great magnet and loadstone of gospel attraction is Christ himself; and if we leave him out, it is as though we should expect the world to receive light without the Almighty Word.

While light was conferred in connection with the mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit, it was unaided by the darkness itself. How could darkness assist to make itself light? Nay, the darkness never did become light. It had to give place to light, but darkness could not help God. If your understanding could resolve darkness into its elements, can you see anything in it which can help to bring the day? If you can, I cannot. Look at your own fallen nature: is there anything there which could assist in the great work of salvation? If you think so, you know not yourself. The power which saves a sinner is not the power of man. The power of man must die, for its only use is to stand out as far as it is able against the power of God; for the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God, neither indeed can be. You cannot extract out of any amount of darkness a single beam of light; and you cannot extract out of any amount of flesh, purify it, educate it, direct it, guide it as you may, you cannot extract anything like spiritual light: that must come from above. "Ye must be born again." Do not think Christians are made by education; they are made by creation. You may wash a corpse as long as ever you please, and even a corpse should be clean, but you cannot wash life into it; and you may deck it in flowers, and robe it in scarlet and fine linen, but you

cannot make it live: the vital spark must come from above. Regeneration is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but by the power and energy of the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God alone.

As this light was unassisted by darkness, so was it also unsolicited. There came no voice out of that thick darkness, "Oh God, enlighten us;" there was no cry of prayer, no note of desire that God would send light: the desire and the thought began with Deity not with the darkness. He said "Let there be light," and there was light. The first work of grace in the heart does not begin with man's desire, but with God's implanting the desire. Dear hearer, if thou desirest to be saved by grace, God gave thee that desire, for thou couldst never get so far as that apart from him. Thy darkness can be darkness, and that is all it can be. It cannot long for or aspire after light; in fact if thy soul longs after light it has some light already: a sincere desire is a part of that divine light and life, and must have come from above. See then the ruin of nature and the freeness of grace. Void and dark, a chaos given up to be covered with blackness and darkness for ever, and, while as yet it is unseeking God, the light arises, and the promise is fulfilled, "I am found of them that sought me not: I said, behold me! behold me! to a people that were not a people." While we were lying in our blood, filthily polluted, defiled, he passed by, and he said in the sovereignty of his love, "Live," and we do live. The whole must be traced to sovereign grace: from this sacred well of discriminating distinguishing grace we must draw water this morning, and we must pour it out, saying, "Oh Lord, I will praise thy name, for the first origin of my light was thy sovereign purpose, and nothing in me."

Before we leave this point I must have you notice that this light came instantaneously. The Hebrew suggests this better far than our translation, it is sublimely brief. "Light be: light was." Here let us observe that the work of giving spiritual light is instantaneous. No matter through what process you may go which you may conclude afterwards to have been preparatory to the light, and there is such a process, the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters before the light came, yet the absolute flash which brings salvation is instantaneous. A man is saved in a moment. From death to life is not the work of years, it is done at once. Saul of Tarsus rides to Damascus foaming at the mouth with threatenings against God's saints: Jesus Christ appears to him, and Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul the humble follower of Jesus, in a moment; and all conversions though they may seem to you gradual, must be like this, for Paul says, "To me first God showed

forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them that believe," as if Paul's salvation was the pattern upon which all others are cut. There must be a time in which you were dead, and then another instant in which you were alive. So with darkness: there must be a period in which you have no light, and another period in which you have some light, and that transition must be an instantaneous one. O that the Lord would work a great work this morning: it is in his power, if so he wills it, to turn every one of your hearts to himself. Let him but speak the word and say, "Light be!" and no matter how dark the sinner's mind, if the divine fiat shall go forth "Light be," that depraved, foolish, drunken sinner, will in a moment feel his heart begin to melt.

As it is instantaneous, so it is irresistible. Darkness must give place when God speaks. Some ascribe omnipotence to the will of man, and lift man up to a sort of rivalry with God. Beloved, man has power to resist the ordinary motions of the Spirit; but when the Holy Ghost comes to effectual work, and puts forth his mighty power, who shall stay his hand, or say unto him, "What doest thou?" "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," is the divine claim of old, and it is true of our God to this day. Oh! how glorious is God when we think of him thus! I could not worship a little God; but when I think of my great God as looking down upon the blackness and darkness of human nature, and saying, "Let there be light," and light comes at once: then I magnify God for his grace, and bless his name,

## II. The second point is DIVINE OBSERVATION.

We read in the fourth verse, "And God saw the light." Does he not see everything? Yes, beloved, he does; but this does not refer to the general perception of God of all his works, but is a something special. "God saw the light"-he looked at it with complacency, gazed upon it with pleasure. I received, this morning, great satisfaction in turning over those few words in my own mind, "God saw the light." I thought to myself-Ah! the Lord looks with special observation upon his own work of grace in his people. If the Lord has given you light, dear friend, no matter though you may only just now have received it, God looks on that light with an eye with which he does not view other things. He sees all other things in his omniscience, but he sees this light in you as his offspring, as dear to himself as his own handiwork: he looks upon it with complacency; he sees it with tender observation. A father looks upon a crowd of boys in a school and sees

them all, but there is one boy whom he sees very differently from all the rest: he watches him with care: it is his own child, and his eye is specially there. Brethren, though you have come here sighing and groaning because of inbred sin, yet the Lord sees what is good in you, for he has put it there. Satan can see the light and he tries to quench it: God sees it and preserves it. The world can see that light and hates it, and would, if possible, extinguish it; but God sees it, and he restrains the world, that it cannot utterly take from you the vital spark. Sometimes you cannot see the light, and I do not suppose it is in the nature of light to perceive itself, but God saw the light, and that is better. It is better that God should see grace in me than that I should see grace in myself. It is very comfortable for me to know that I am one of God's people-I cannot have much joy and peace in believing, unless I have the gracious assurance of this fact, but still that fact is not the foundation of my hope, for, whether I know it or not if the Lord knows it, I am still safe. This is the foundation, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." You and I are apt to say of such an one, "What a Christian he is." Very likely his religion is all external show, and the Lord hath no regard unto his offering any more than he had unto the offering of Cain. We look at that Pharisee, standing in the Temple, with his phylacteries and hear him saying, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," and we envy him and think what a noble saint he is, but the Lord knows him and sees no light in him; but that poor humble publican who stands in the corner and dares not lift so much as his eyes unto heaven cannot see any light in himself, but God sees the light in him and he goes down to his house justified rather than the other. You may be going to-day down, down into the vaults of despondency and even despair: ah, but if your soul has any longing towards Christ, and if you are still seeking to rest in him, God sees the light and he will take care to discern between you and the darkness and to preserve you even to the day of his Son's appearing. Beloved, it is most pleasant to the believer to know that God's eye is never taken off from that work of grace which he has begun. Here is a promise. "I, the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment lest any hurt it: I will keep it night and day." Now this is-I must say again-this is a precious thought to those of you who have watched and guarded yourselves, and felt your own powerlessness to do so, and who are ready to give it up because you have thought, "Well, I cannot watch always and I fear I shall become a prey to temptation." The Lord watches you, and he sees the light. He has his eye always fixed upon the work of grace that is in your soul. It is observable that in the New Testament we find the apostles

mentioning the virtues of the saints, but it is very seldom that they say anything about their faults. Take, for instance, Abraham. His faith is extolled, but nothing is said about his equivocation. In the case of Rahab, her faith is magnified, but nothing is said about her lying. Why is that? Is it not because God saw the light and when he was writing this Book of the new creation, he said nothing of the darkness. He saw his own work and would not regard the devil's work, and the work of fallen human nature too; but he had respect only to the light.

### **III.** We pass on to the third point, and that is, DIVINE APPROBATION.

"God saw the light, that it was good." Light is good in all respects. The natural light is good. Solomon says, "It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun;" but you did not want Solomon to inform you upon that point. Any blind man who will tell you the tale of his sorrows will be quite philosopher enough to convince you that light is good. Gospel light is good. "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see." You only need to travel into heathen lands, and witness the superstition and cruelty of the dark places of the earth, to understand that gospel light is good. As for spiritual light, those that have received it long for more of it, that they may see yet more and more the glory of heaven's essential light! O God, thou art of good the unmeasured Sea; thou art of light both soul, and source, and center. Whether, then, we take natural light, gospel light, spiritual light, or essential light, we may say of it, as God did, that it was good. But we are speaking now of light spiritual. Why is that good? Well, it must be so, from its source. The light emanates from God, in whom is no darkness at all, and, as it comes absolutely and directly from him, it must be good. As every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, so everything which comes from above is good and perfect. The Lord distributes no alloyed metal: he never gives his people that which is mixed and debased. Thy words, O God, are pure; as silver tried in the furnace of earth purified seven times. The light of the new nature is good when we consider its origin.

It is good, again, when we consider its likeness. Light is like to God. It is a thing so spiritual, so utterly to be ungrasped by the hand of flesh, that it has often been selected as the very type of God. Certainly the new nature in man is like to God. It is, in fact, the nature of God implanted in us. The Holy Ghost dwells in us, and is the radix-the root of the new nature by which we become akin with the Most High. The Spirit of adoption by which we cry, "Abba, Father," is the Holy Spirit himself working in us to

will and to do of his own good pleasure. Ignatius used to call himself, Theophorus, or the God-bearer. The title might seem eccentric, but the fact is true of all the saints-they bear God about with them. God dwelleth in his saints as in a temple.

It is good, also in its effect. It is good for a man to know his danger-it makes him start from it. It is good for him to know the evil of his sin-it makes him avoid it, and repent of it. It is good for him to know a Savior's love-it leads him to trust the Savior, and brings him to pardon, to justification, and to eternal life. It is good to have the light which reveals the God of love, for without him we are aliens, orphans, houseless wanderers. It is good to have the light to see the world to come, that we may escape its agonies, that we may seek after its glories. It is good to have light in all respects, for otherwise, like blind men, we should wretchedly and miserably wander in a labyrinth, and miss our way to glory and to God. Light is good in its effects.

It is good, moreover, because it glorifies God. Where were God's glory in the outward universe without light? Could we gaze upon the landscape? Could we stand upon the hill-top and drink in the view, and then praise the glorious Maker who had made these marvellous works, if there were no light? I question whether those first-born sons of light, the angels, would have a song to sing before the eternal throne, if light were taken away. Certainly, beloved, spiritual light brings glory to God. It prostrates us in the dust, but it lifts HIM up. Spiritual light shows us our emptiness, our poverty, our wretchedness, but it reveals in blessed contrast his fullness, his riches, his freeness of grace. The more light in the soul, the more gratitude to God. The more we know of Christ, and the covenant of grace, and of God himself, the louder and sweeter is that song which our glad hearts send up to the eternal throne. Let me say of the work of God in the soul as compared to light, that it is good in the widest possible sense. The new nature which God puts in us never sins: it cannot sin, because it is born of God. "What," say you, "does a Christian never sin?" Not with the new nature; the new nature never sins: the old nature sins. It is the darkness which is dark: the light is not darkness; the light is always light. It is not possible that the Christ who dwelleth in us could sin. I again repeat the words, "He cannot sin, because he is born of God." He keepeth himself so that the evil one toucheth him not. What sin there is in the believer, comes from the remnants of corruption; the spirit which is implanted never can sin, never can have communion with sin, any more than light can have

communion with darkness. It is good-so good that is the very same life which shall enter heaven. You must not suppose that a believer will have a new life granted to him when he gets to heaven. Beloved, he will never die. The flesh dies, but the new nature which God gives to us is as immortal as God himself: it can neither be quenched here by temptation, nor there by the act of death. The love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord is everlasting, ever-living; and though corruption and worms destroy this body, yet the new born spirit, like the light, will never see corruption. Jesus Christ has said himself "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." The new nature shall never die. Its light shall develop itself from dawning twilight into the splendor of noon-day, and shall abide everlastingly in fullness of glory, according to the promise, "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

**IV.** Now I must, by your patience, take you to the next point, which is, DIVINE SEPARATION.

It appears that though God made light there was still darkness in the world. Read the fourth verse, "And God divided the light from the darkness." Beloved, the moment you become a Christian, you will begin to fight. You will be easy and comfortable enough, as long as you are a sinner, but as soon as you become a Christian, you will have no more rest. John Bunyan was no great poet, but sometimes he struck out great truths in his rhymes. He has this one-

*"A Christian man is seldom long at ease  
When one trouble's gone another doth him seize."*

This is very true, because a believer is a double man. There are two principles in him. At first, there was but one principle, which was darkness. Now light has entered, and the two principles disagree. So observe this separation. One part of the Divine work in the soul of man is to make a separation in the man himself. I will put this plainly, and it shall be a test between a child of God and the child of darkness this morning. Do you feel an inward contention and war going on? Can you read these verses and understand them: they are very strange verses: they are taken out of the same psalm and follow each other. "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless, I am continually with thee. Thou holdest me by my right hand." There are hundreds of people who, if you were to preach from the text would say, "Why the man contradicts himself. He



makes himself out to be a beast, and yet he says he dwells near to God!" Ah, none but the believer knows that secret. You remember the apostle Paul's own words in the seventh chapter of Romans. Many stupid people who are ignorant of the inner life, make it out that Paul could not have been a Christian at all when he wrote those words, but he was an advanced believer: and only advanced believers can sympathize with him. "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Permit me to put these two verses together-" O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." How can these two things be consistent? Ask the spiritual man: he will tell you, "The Lord divideth between light and darkness." Darkness, by itself, will go on comfortably enough; but when the Lord sends in light, there will be a conflict-a terrible conflict too-and you will find your own self divided into camps; you will find both Cain and Abel in your heart, Egyptians and Israelites in your soul, and if there be a David in your heart, there will be a Saul too.

Whereas there is a division within the Christian, there is certain to be a division without. So soon as ever the Lord gives to any believer light, lie begins to separate himself from the darkness. The world's religion used to satisfy him. If there was a pretty-looking building, and a good-looking minister who could put his words well together, and garnish the altar finely, the child of darkness did not care what lie heard- whether the gospel was preached or not; but so soon as ever he receives light, he cries, "All

this is nothing to me, millinery, or anything else; I want light and truth, and I cannot go to hear anything but the gospel." He separates himself from the world's religion, finds out where Christ is preached, and goes there. Then as to society, the dead, carnal religionist can get on very well in ordinary society, but it is not so when he has light. I cannot go to light company, wasting the evening, showing off my fine clothes, and talking frivolity and nonsense. Where are the children of light? Very likely down in some ragged school, where poor men and women seek to bless the little ones. That is the place for the child of light. It does not matter what particular class of society the saints belong to, we shall seek their society. We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; the light gathers to itself, and the darkness to itself. My dear brethren, what God has divided, let us never unite. God has set an everlasting distance between the sheep and the goats: let us do the same. Christ went without the camp, bearing his reproach: let us therefore come out from among them and be separate. Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners: let us be nonconformists to the world; let us dissent from all sin, and be distinguished from the world, even as Jesus Christ was not of the world. This is a work of grace, then, to make a wondrous separation.

## **V.** Next notice DIVINE NOMINATION.

Things must have names; Adam named the beasts, but God himself named the day and the night. Oh serve the fifth verse, "And God called the light day, and the darkness called he night." It is a very blessed work of grace to teach us to call things by their right names. Why did he call the light day and the darkness night, except for this reason :-He seems to say, "Let these things be distinguished, let light wear its name of day, and darkness its title of night. From which I gather that the good which God works in his people must be good always, and can never be described as bad. The spiritual aspirations of God's people never can be evil. Carnal reason calls them folly, but the Lord would have us call them good. Here is a man who is panting after graces which will cost him great sacrifices, panting after a spirituality which will separate him from men; it cannot be evil for him to seek the highest possible degree of grace. On the other hand, that which is darkness cannot be light, and must not be called anything but night. We have heard of some who have taken the sins of God's people and said, "These are not sins in these people." This is a grievous error, for darkness is darkness, and must be called night wherever it may be, and if I find sin in my father or mother, dearly as I love them, and desire to have them

perfect, yet I must not make excuse for it and seek to call darkness day. I must not in myself, when I discern imperfection, find a soft name for it, by which I may take away its wickedness. I must call it what it is. I remember hearing of a good man. I believe he was such, who fell into drunkenness on one occasion. He was excommunicated from Church fellowship, and properly so; but afterwards he became very penitent, and he went about the streets like a man who really should die of grief, and ashamed because of his sin. He could not find peace. A dear brother, who knew something of him, took him aside one day and said, "Dear brother, have you made a full confession of your sin before God?" He thought he had. "Now," said the other, "it is a hard thing for me to ask, but I should like to hear you confess this sin." So he did. When he came to the act of confessing his sin to God, he said, "Lord, thou knowest I have indulged my appetites," and so on. He was not a bit better. "Now," said his friend, "My dear brother, you had better unveil your whole sin and hide nothing. Then he prayed thus: "Lord, thou knowest I got drunk." It was all right as soon as he brought the thing out and called the darkness night, and went no longer round about. The Lord will not hear his people if they call the darkness day. He will not attend to them. He will have them call darkness night. So, let us go where we may, whether in ourselves or in other people, we must learn to call a spade a spade, to call things by their right names. There is a great deal, remember, in the names which we give to things, because they are generally the index of our own estimation of what those things are. It is a work of grace to teach us always to call the light day, and the darkness night.

"But" says one "can't the right sometimes be wrong?" Never, never. I am asked by a man this question. "There is such and such a church; I am a minister there, and there are some things I don't agree with, and yet I swear I do. I swear that, ex animo, I agree, although I do not. If I did not swear, I should lose my sphere of usefulness. If I don't swear it, I shall never have an opportunity of doing good." My dear friend, you have nothing to do with that; whether you are doing good or mischief, your business is to call darkness night and light day. Never do a bad thing, though you might hope to achieve a world of good by it. Right is never wrong and wrong is never right. It cannot be right for a man to do evil that good may come. Of those that hold such maxims it is written "Their damnation is just." Let the light be called day and the darkness night.

Observe again-this is somewhat remarkable-that we read in the next sentence, "And the evening and the morning were the first day." Who called it so? I do not find that God did, yet it is in the book of God and therefore I cannot take exception to it. How is it? The evening! Why the evening was darkness and the morning was light. The two together are called by the same name that is given to the light alone! What then! Why beloved, in every believer there is darkness and there is light, and yet he is not to be named a sinner because there is sin in him but he is to be named from the major part of him, he is to be named from the grander quality. He is to be named a saint because there is saintness in him notwithstanding all the sin. Now this will be a comforting thought to those of you who are mourning your infirmities. While I was talking about light von said, "Yes, thank God I have some; I know the difference between it and darkness, yet for all that, darkness is my daily pest and trouble. Can I be a child of God while there is any darkness in me?" Dear brother, you like the day take not your name from the evening, but from the morning; from the day you shall be called altogether, as if you were now perfectly what you will be soon, You shall be called the child of the light, though there is darkness in you still. You are named after what is the predominating quality in the sight of God, which will one day be the only principle remaining. Observe that the evening is put first. We naturally have darkness first, and it is often first in our mournful apprehension, as we have to come to God with "God be merciful to me, a sinner;" the place of the morning is second, for it only dawns because of divine grace. But, O beloved, it is a blessed aphorism of John Bunyan, that that which is last, lasts for ever. That which is first, has to give up its turn to the last; but nothing comes after the last. So that though I am darkness, when once I am light in the Lord, there is no evening to follow; thy sun shall no more go down. The first day in this life is an evening and a morning; but the second day, when we shall be with God for ever, shall be a day with no evening, but one, sacred, high, eternal noon.

I have thus opened up a few experimental secrets. Some of you can say, "I understand it, for I feel it all in my life; I trust I am a new creature." Dear friends, let me congratulate you; let me say to you, "Walk in the light; live as children of the light; be you ever with your faces towards the sun; seek Christ; long to be made like him, and never be content till, like the angel whom Milton speaks of, who dwells in the sun, you come to dwell in God,

and lose yourself most blessedly by being swallowed up and filled with all the fullness of his glory.”

As for others here present, and I fear there are some such, who have said, “This is all strange to me.” Dear friend, I pray God it may not be long strange to you, for if you are a stranger to a new creation, you are a stranger to the only hope of happiness. “Ye must be born again,” is the old sentence which divine revelation has spoken- “ye must.” It is not “Ye may be:” it is “Ye must.” It is not “Some of you may do without it: you are so good you do not want it:”-no, “You must, you must be born again.” He that sitteth on the throne saith, “Behold I make all things new.” Has he made you new? The gates of heaven are shut against the old creation: the floods destroyed it at the first, the floods of fire shall destroy it yet again. If you are not new-created you shall not outlive the general blaze. The first creation must be swept away; and you, if you be not new created, must be swallowed up in everlasting misery; but if God has made you a new creature, that new creation is not to be touched by fire, nor flood, nor death, nor grave; you, as a part of that new creation, shall sing in the New Jerusalem, which shall come down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband; you shall tread her golden streets, delight in her jasper-radiance, and sing with the mighty hosts, in that day when they shall sing a new song unto the Lord who hath created all things new. The Lord grant we may be all present in the New Jerusalem which is from above, which is the mother of all the saints, and unto God be praise, world without end. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-***  
***John 1, 3:18; and 1 Thessalonians 5.***

# THE GREAT ARBITRATION CASE.

NO. 661

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Neither is there any daysman betwixt us,  
that might lay his hand upon us both.” — Job 9:33.*

THE patriarch Job, when reasoning with the Lord concerning his great affliction, felt himself to be at a disadvantage and declined the controversy, saying, “He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment.” Yet feeling that his friends were cruelly misstating his case, he still desired to spread it before the Lord, but wished for a mediator, a middleman, to act as umpire and decide the case. In his mournful plight he sighed for an arbitrator who, while dealing justly for God, would at the same time deal kindly with poor flesh and blood, being able to lay his hand upon both. But, dear friends, what Job desired to have, the Lord has provided for us in the person of his own dear Son, Jesus Christ. We cannot say with Job that there is no daysman who can lay his hand upon both, because there is now “one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” In him let us rejoice, if indeed we have an interest in him; and if we have not yet received him, may almighty grace bring us even now to accept him as our advocate and friend.

There is an old quarrel between the thrice holy God and his sinful subjects, the sons of Adam. Man has sinned; he has broken God’s law in every part of it, and has wantonly cast off from him the allegiance which was due to his Maker and his King. There is a suit against man, which was formally instituted at Sinai and must be pleaded in the Court of King’s Bench, before the Judge of quick and dead. God is the great plaintiff against his sinful creatures who are the defendants. If that suit be carried into court, it must go against the sinner. There is no hope whatever that at the last

tremendous day any sinner will be able to stand in judgment if he shall leave the matter of his debts and obligations towards his God unsettled until that dreadful hour. Sinner, it would be well for thee to “agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way,” for if thou be once delivered up to the great Judge of all the earth, there is not the slightest hope that thy suit can be decided otherwise than to thine eternal ruin. “Weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,” will be the doom adjudged thee for ever, if thy case as before the living God shall ever come to be tried at the fiery throne of absolute justice. But the infinite grace of God proposes an arbitration, and I trust there are many here who are not anxious to have their suit carried into court, but are willing that the appointed daysman should stand betwixt them and God, and lay his hand upon both, and propose and carry out a plan of reconciliation. There is hope for thee, thou bankrupt sinner, that thou mayest yet be at peace with God. There is a way by which thy debts may yet be paid; that way is a blessed arbitration in which Jesus Christ shall stand as the daysman.

Let me begin by describing the essentials of an arbitrator, or daysman; then let me take you into the arbitrator’s court and show you his proceedings; and then for a little time, if there be space enough, let us dwell upon the happy success of our great Daysman.

**I.** First of all, let me describe what are THE ESSENTIALS OF AN UMPIRE, AN ARBITRATOR, OR A DAYSMAN.

The first essential is, that both parties should be agreed to accept him. Let me come to thee, thou sinner, against whom God has laid his suit, and put the matter to thee. God has accepted Christ Jesus to be his umpire in his dispute. He appointed him to the office, and chose him for it before he laid the foundations of the world. He is God’s fellow, equal with the Most High, and can put his hand upon the Eternal Father without fear, because he is dearly beloved of that Father’s heart. He is “very God of very God,” and is in no respect inferior to “God over all, blessed for ever.” But he is also a man like thyself, sinner. He once suffered, hungered, thirsted, and knew the meaning of poverty and pain. Nay, he went farther, he was tempted as thou hast been, and farther still, he suffered the pangs of death, as thou poor mortal man wilt one day have to do. Now, what thinkest thou? God has accepted him; canst thou agree with God in this matter, and agree to take Christ to be thy daysman too? Does foolish enmity possess thee, or does grace reign and lead thee to accept Emmanuel, God with us,

as umpire in this great dispute? Let me say to thee that thou wilt never find another so near akin to thee, so tender, so sympathetic, with such bowels of compassion towards thee. Love streamed from his eyes in life, and poured from his wounds in death. He is “the express image” of Jehovah’s person, and you know that Jehovah’s name is “Love.” “God is love,” and Christ is love. Sinner, has divine grace brought thee to thy senses? Wilt thou accept Christ now? Art thou willing that he should take this case into his hands and arbitrate between thee and God? for if God accepteth him, and thou accept him too, then he has one of the first qualifications for being a daysman.

But, in the next place, both parties must be fully agreed to leave the case entirely in the arbitrator’s hands. If the arbitrator does not possess the power of settling the case, then pleading before him is only making an opportunity for wrangling, without any chance of coming to a peaceful settlement. Now God has committed “all power” into the hands of his Son. Jesus Christ is the plenipotentiary of God, and has been invested with full ambassadorial powers. He comes commissioned by his Father, and he can say in all that he does towards sinners, that his Father’s heart is with him. If the case be settled by him, the Father is agreed. Now, sinner, does grace move thy heart to do the same? Wilt thou agree to put thy case into the hands of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man? Wilt thou abide by his decision? Wilt thou have it settled according to his judgment, and shall the verdict which he lives stand absolute and fast with thee? If so, then Christ has another essential of an arbitrator; but if not, remember, though he may make peace for others, he will never make peace for thee; for this know, that until the grace of God has made thee willing to trust the ease in Jesu’s hands, there can be no peace for thee, and thou art wilfully remaining God’s enemy by refusing to accept his dear Son.

Further, let us say, that to make a good arbitrator or umpire, it is essential that he be a fit person. If the case were between a king and a beggar, it would not seem exactly right that another king should be the arbitrator, nor another beggar; but if there could be found a person who combined the two, who was both prince and beggar, then such a man could be selected by both. Our Lord Jesus Christ precisely meets the case. There is a very great disparity between the plaintiff and the defendant, for how great is the gulf which exists between the eternal God and poor fallen man! How is this to be bridged? Why by none except by one who is God and who at the same time can become man. Now the only being who can do this is Jesus



Christ. He can put his hand on thee, stooping down to all thine infirmity and thy sorrow, and he can put his other hand upon the Eternal Majesty, and claim to be co-equal with God and co-eternal with the Father. Dost thou not see, then, his fitness? Surely it were the path of wisdom, sinner, to accept him at once as the arbitrator in the case. See how well he understands it! I should not do to be an arbitrator in legal cases, because, though I should be anxious to do justice, yet I should know nothing of the law of the case, But Christ knows your case, and the law concerning it, because he has lived among men, and has passed through and suffered the penalties of justice. There cannot surely be a better skilled or more judicious daysman than our blessed Redeemer.

Yet there is one more essential of an umpire, and that is, that he should be a person desirous to bring the case to a happy settlement. If you appoint a quarrelsome arbitrator, he may delight to “set dogs by the ears;” but if you elect one who is anxious for the good of both, and wishes to make both friends, then he is just the very man, though, to be sure, he would be a man of a thousand, very precious when found, but very hard to discover. Oh that all law-suits could be decided by such men, In the great case which is pending between God and the sinner, the Lord Jesus Christ has a sincere anxiety both for his Father’s glory and for the sinner’s welfare, and that there should be peace between the two contending parties. It is the life and aim of Jesus Christ to make peace. He delighteth not in the death of sinners, and he knows no joy greater than that of receiving prodigals to his bosom, and of bringing lost sheep back again to the fold. You cannot tell how high the Savior’s bosom swells with an intense desire to make to himself a great name as a peace-maker. Never had warrior such ambition to make war and to win victories therein, as Christ has to end war, and to win thereby the bloodless triumphs of peace. From the heights of heaven he came leaping like a young roe down to the plains of earth. From earth he leaped into the depths of the grave; then up again at a bound he sprang to earth, and up again to heaven; and still he resteth not, but presseth on in his mighty work to ingather sinners, and to reconcile them unto God; making himself a propitiation for their sins.

Thou seest then, sinner, how the case is. God has evidently chosen the most fitting arbitrator. That arbitrator is willing to undertake the case, and thou mayest well repose all confidence in him; but and if thou shalt live and die without accepting him as thine arbitrator, then, the case going against thee, thou wilt have none to blame but thyself. When the everlasting

damages shall be assessed against thee in thy soul and body for ever, thou shalt have to curse only thine own folly for having been the cause of thy ruin. May I ask you to speak candidly? Has the Holy Ghost so turned the natural bent and current of your will, that you have chosen him because he has first chosen you? Do you feel that Christ this day is standing before God for you? He is God's anointed; is he your elected? God's choice pitches upon him, does your choice agree therewith? Remember, where there is no will towards Christ, Christ as yet exercises no saving power. Christ saves no sinner who lives and dies unwilling. He makes unwilling sinners willing before he speaks a word of comfort to them. It is the mark of our election as his people, that we are made willing in the day of God's power. Lay your hope where God has laid your help, namely, on Christ. mighty to save. You cannot have an arbitrator except both sides be agreed. Dost thou say ay, ay, with all my soul I choose him? Then let us proceed.

**II.** And now I shall want, by your leave, to TAKE YOU INTO THE COURT WHERE THE TRIAL IS GOING ON, AND SHOW YOU THE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE GREAT DAYSMAN.

"The man, Christ Jesus," who is "God over all, blessed for ever," opens his court by laying down the principles upon which he intends to deliver judgment, and those principles I will now try to explain and expound. They are two-fold-first, strict justice; and secondly, fervent love.

The arbitrator has determined that let the case go as it may there shall be full justice done, justice to the very extreme, whether it be for or against the defendant. He intends to take the law in its sternest and severest aspect, and to judge according to its strictest letter. He will not be guilty of partiality on either side. If the law says that the sinner shall die, the arbitrator declares that he will judge that the sinner shall die; and if, on the other hand, the defendant can plead and prove that he is innocent, he intends to adjudge to him the award of innocence, namely ETERNAL LIFE. If the sinner can prove that he has fairly won it, he shall have his due. Either way, whether it be in favor of the plaintiff or of the defendant, the condition of judgment is to be strict justice.

But the arbitrator also says that he will judge according to the second rule, that of fervent love. He loves his Father, and therefore he will decide on nothing that may attain his honor or disgrace his crown. He so loves God, the Eternal One, that he will suffer heaven and earth to pass away sooner than there shall be one blot upon the character of the Most High. On the

other hand, he so loves the poor defendant, man, that he will be willing to do anything rather than inflict penalty upon him unless justice shall absolutely require it. He loves man with so large a love that nothing will delight him more than to decide in his favor, and he will be but too glad if he can be the means

happily establishing peace between the two. How these principles are to meet, will be seen by and by. At present he lays them down very positively. "He that ruleth among men must be just." An arbitration must be just; or else he is not fit to hold the scales in any suit. Or the other hand, he must be tender; for his name, as God, is love; and his nature as man is gentleness and mercy. Both parties should distinctly consent to these principles. How can they do otherwise? Do they not commend themselves to all of you? Let justice and love unite if they can.

Having thus laid down the principles of judgment, the arbitrator next calls upon the plaintiff to state his case. Let us listen while the great Creator speaks: may God give me grace now reverently to state it in his name, as one poor sinner stating God's case against us all. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." The Eternal God charges us, and let me confess at once most justly and most truly charges us, with having broken all his commandments-some of them in act, some of them in word, all of them in heart, and thought, and imagination. He charges upon us, that against light and knowledge we have chosen the evil and forsaken the good; that knowing what we were doing we have turned aside from his most righteous law and have gone astray like lost sheep, following the imaginations and devices of our own hearts. The great Plaintiff claims that inasmuch as we are his creatures we ought to have obeyed him, that inasmuch as we owe our very lives to his daily care we ought to have rendered him service instead of disobedience, and to have been his loyal subjects instead of turning traitors to his throne. All this, calmly and dispassionately, according to the great Book of the law, is laid to our charge before the Daysman. No exaggeration of sin is brought against us. It is simply declared of us that the whole head is sick and the whole heart is

faint; that there is none that doeth good, no, not one; that we have all gone out of the way, and altogether become unprofitable. This is God's case. He says, "I made this man; curiously was he wrought in the lowest parts of the earth; and all his members bear traces of my singular handiwork. I made him for my honor, and he has not honored me. I created him for my service, and he has not served me. Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years I have kept the breath in his nostrils; the bread he has eaten has been the daily portion of my bounty; his garments are the livery of my charity; and all this while he has neither thought of me, his Creator and Preserver, nor done anything in my service. He has served his family, his wife and children, but his Maker he has despised. He has served his country, his neighbors, the borough in which he dwells; but I who made him, I have had nothing from him. He has been an unprofitable servant unto me." I think I may put the plaintiff's case into your hands. Which of you would keep a horse, and that horse should yield you no obedience? What excuse is it that though I might not use him he would carry another? Nay, the case is worse than this. Not only has man done nothing, but worse than nothing. Which of you would keep a dog, which, instead of fawning upon you, would bark at you-fly at you, and tear you in his rage? Some of us have done this to God; we have perhaps cursed him to his face; we have broken his sabbaths, laughed at his gospel, and persecuted his saints. You would have said of such a dog, let it die. Wherefore should I harbour in my house a dog that treats me thus? Yet, hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; God has borne with your ill manners, and he still cries "forbear." He puts the lifted thunder back into the arsenal of his dread artillery. I wish I could state the case as I ought. My lips are but clay; and these words should be like fire in the sinner's soul. When I meditated upon this subject alone, I felt much sympathy with God, that he should have been so ill treated; and whereas some men speak of the flames of hell as too great a punishment for sin, it seems ten thousand marvels that we should not have been thrust down there long ago.

The plaintiff's case having thus been stated the defendant is called upon by the Daysman for his; and I think I hear him as he begins. First of all the trembling defendant sinner pleads-"I confess to the 'indictment, but I say I could not help it. I have sinned, it is true, but my nature was such that I could not well do otherwise; I must lay all the blame of it to my own heart; my heart was deceitful and my nature was evil." The Daysman at once rules that this is no excuse whatever, but an aggravation, for inasmuch as it

is conceded that the man's heart itself is enmity against God, this in an admission of yet greater malice and blacker rebellion. It was only alleged against the offender in the first place that he had outwardly offended; but he acknowledges that he does it inwardly, and confesses that his very heart is traitorous against God, and is fully set upon working the King's damage and dishonor. It is determined, therefore, by the Daysman that this excuse will not stand, and he gives a case in point:-a thief is brought up for stealing, and he pleads that his heart was thievish, that he felt a constant inclination to steal, and that therefore he could not help running off with any goods within his reach. The judge very properly answers, "Then I shall give you twice as much penalty as any other man who only fell into the fault by surprise, for according to your own confession, you are a thief through and through; what you have said is not an excuse, but an aggravation."

Then the defendant pleads in the next place that albeit he acknowledges the facts alleged against him, yet he is no worse than other offenders, and that there are many in the world who have sinned more grievously than he has done. He says he has been envious, and angry, and worldly, and covetous, and has forgotten God; but then he never was an adulterer, or a thief, or a drunkard, or a blasphemer, and he pleads that his lesser crimes may well be winked at, But the great Daysman at once turns to the Statute Book, and says that as he is about to give his decision by law that plea is not at all tenable, for the law book has it-"Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." The offense of one sinner doth not excuse the offense of another; and the arbitrator declares that he cannot mix up other cases with the case now in hand; that the present offender has on his own confession broken the law, and that as the law book stands that is the only question to be decided, for "the soul that sinneth it shall die," and if the defendant has no better plea to offer, judgment must go against him.

The sinner urges further, that though he has offended, and offended very greatly and grievously, yet he has done a great many good things. It is true he did not love God, but he always went to chapel. It is true he did not pray, but still he belonged to a singing-class. It is quite correct that he did not love his neighbor as himself, but he always liked to relieve the poor. But the Daysman, looking the sinner full in the face, tells him that this plea also is bad, for the alleged commission of some acts of loyalty will not make compensation for avowed acts of treason. "Those things," saith he,

“ye ought to have done, but not to have left the others undone;” and he tells the sinner, with all kindness and gentleness, that straining at a gnat does not exonerate him for having swallowed a camel; and that having tithed mint, and anise, and cummin, is no justification for having devoured a widow’s house. To have forgotten God is in itself a great enormity; to have lived without serving him is a crime of omission so great, that whatever the sinner may have done on the contra, stands for nothing at all, since he has even then in that case done only what he ought to have done. You see at once the justice of this decision. If any of you were to say to your grocer, or tailor, when they send in their bills, “Well, now, you ought not to ask for payment of that account, because I did pay you another bill—you ought not to ask me to pay for that suit of clothes, because I did pay you for another suit;” I think the answer would be, “But in paying for what you had before, you only did what you ought to do; but I still have a demand upon you for this.” So all the good deeds you have ever done are only debts discharged which were most fully due, (supposing them to be good deeds, which is very questionable) and they leave the great debt still untouched.

The defendant has no end of pleas, for the sinner has a thousand excuses; and finding that nothing else will do, he begins to appeal to the mercy of the plaintiff, and says that for the future he will do better. He confesses that he is in debt, but he will run up no more bills at that shop. He acknowledges that he has offended, but he vows he will not do so again. He is quite sure that the future shall be as free from fault as angels are from sin. Though it is true that he just now said his heart was bad, still he feels inclined to think that it is not so very bad after all; he is conceited enough to think that he can in the future keep himself from committing sin; thereby, you see, admitting the worthlessness of his former plea on which he relied so much “Now,” he says, “if for life I become a teetotaller, then surely I may be excused for having been a drunkard; suppose now that I am always honest and steady, and never again say one ill word, will not that exonerate me from all my wrong-doings, and for having blasphemed God?” But the Daysman rules, still with kindness and gentleness, that the greatest imaginable virtue in the future will be no recompense for the sin of the past; for he finds in the lawbook no promise whatever made to that effect: but the statute runs in these words, “He will by no means spare the guilty;” “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

You would think that the defendant would now be fairly beaten, but he is not: he asks leave to step across the way to bring in a friend of his. He is allowed to do so, and comes back with a gentleman dressed in such a queer style, that, if you had not sometimes seen the like in certain Puseyite Churches, you would suppose him to have arrayed himself for the mere purpose of amusing children at a show, where a merry-andrew is the presiding genius. The defendant seems to imagine that if the case be left to this gentleman in the white shirt and ribbons, he will settle it with ease. He has with him a little bottle of water, by which he can turn hearts of stone into flesh, making heirs of wrath into "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." He has a certain portion of mystical bread, and magical wine, the reception with which he can work wonderful transformation, producing flesh and blood therefrom at his reverence's will and pleasure. In fact, this gentleman trades and gets his living by the prosecution of magic. He has occult influences streaming from his fingers, which influences he derived originally from a gentleman in lawn; and he now pretends to have ability derived from the apostles, most probably from Judas, by marvellous manipulations-how I cannot tell you, but by a kind of sleight of hand-to settle the case. But the Daysman, with a frown, hurls a thunderbolt from his hand against the impudent impostor, and bids him take himself away, and not again deceive poor sinners with his vain pretensions. He warns the defendant that the priest is an arrant knave, that whatever professions he may make of being a "successor of the apostles," he knows nothing about apostolical doctrine, or else he would not have intruded his sinful, silly self, between men's souls and God. He bids him advise the man to dress himself like a person in his right mind, who was about honest work, and not as a necromancer or priest of Baal, and give himself to preaching the gospel, instead of propagating the superstitious inventions of Rome.

What is the poor defendant to do now? He is fairly beaten this time. He falls down on his knees, and with many tears and lamentations he cries, "I see how the case stands; I have nothing to plead, but I appeal to the mercy of the plaintiff; I confess that I have broken his commandments; I acknowledge that I deserve his wrath; but I have heard that he is merciful, and I plead for free and full forgiveness."

And now comes another scene. The plaintiff seeing the sinner on his knees, with his eyes full of tears, makes this reply, "I am willing at all times to deal kindly and according to lovingkindness with all my creatures; but will the

arbitrator for a moment suggest that I should damage and ruin my own perfections of truth and holiness; that I should belie my own word; that I should imperil my own throne; that I should make the purity of immaculate justice to be suspected, and should bring down the glory of my unsullied holiness, because this creature has offended me, and now craves for mercy? I cannot, I will not spare the guilty; he has offended, and he must die! 'As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.' Still, this 'would rather' must not be supreme. I am gracious and would spare the sinner, but I am just, and must not unsay my own words. I swore with an oath, 'The soul that sinneth shall die.' I have laid it down as a matter of firm decree, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' This sinner is righteously cursed, and he must inevitably die; and yet I love him. How can I give thee up, Ephraim? how can I make thee as Admah? How can I set thee as Zeboim? And yet, how can I put thee among the children? Would it not be a worse calamity that I should be unjust than that earth should lose its inhabitants? Better all men perish, than that the universe should lose the justice of God as its stay and shield." The arbitrator bows and says, "Even so; justice demands that the offender should die, and I would not have thee unjust."

What more does the arbitrator say? He sits still, and the case is in suspense. There stands the just and holy God, willing to forgive if it can be done without injury to the immutable principles of right. There sits the arbitrator, looking with eyes of love upon the poor, weeping, trembling sinner, and anxious to devise a plan to save him, but conscious that that plan must not infringe upon divine justice; for it were a worse cruelty to injure divine perfections than it were to destroy the whole human race. The arbitrator, therefore, after pausing awhile, puts it thus: "I am anxious that these two should be brought together; I love them both: I cannot, on the one hand, recommend that my Father should stain his honor; I cannot, on the other hand, endure that this sinner should be cast eternally into hell; I will decide the case, and it shall be thus: I will pay my Father's justice all it craves; I pledge myself that in the fullness of time I will suffer in my own proper person all that the weeping, trembling sinner ought to have suffered. My Father, wilt thou stand to this?" The eternal God accepts the awful sacrifice! What say you, sinner, what say you? Why, methinks you cannot have two opinions. If you are sane-and may God make you sane-you will melt with wonder. You will say, "I could not have thought this! I never



called in a daysman with an expectation of this! I have sinned, and he declares that he will suffer; I am guilty, and he says that he will be punished for me!"

Yes, sinner, and he did more than say it, for when the fullness of time came-you know the story. The officers of justice served him with the writ, and he was taken from his knees in the garden of Gethsemane away to the court, and there he was tried and condemned; and you know how his back was scourged till the white bones stood like islands of ivory in the midst of a crimson sea of gore; you know how his head was crowned with thorns, and his cheeks were given to those who plucked off the hair! Can you not see him hounded through the streets of Jerusalem, with the spittle of the brutal soldiery still upon his unwashed face, and his wounds all unstanched and bleeding? Can you not see him as they hurl him down and fasten him to the accursed tree?-then they lift the cross and dash it down into its socket in the earth, dislocating every bone, tearing every nerve and sinew, filling his soul as full of agony as this earth is full of sin, or the depths of the ocean filled with its floods? You do not know, however, what he suffered within. Hell held carnival within his heart. Every arrow of the infernal pit was discharged at him, and heaven itself forsook him. The thunderbolts of vengeance fell upon him, and his Father hid his face from him till he cried in his agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And so he suffered on, and on, and on, till "It is finished" closed the scene.

Here, then, is the arbitration. Christ himself suffers; and now I have to put the query, "Hast thou accepted Christ?" O dear friend, if thou hast, I know that God the Holy Ghost has made thee accept him; but if thou hast not, what shall I call thee? I will not upbraid thee, but my heart would weep over thee. How canst thou be so mad as to forego a compromise so blessed, an arbitration so divine! Oh! kiss the feet of the Daysman; love him all thy life, that he has decided the case so blessedly.

### III. Let us now look at THE DAYSMAN'S SUCCESS.

For every soul who has received Christ, Christ has made a full atonement which God the Father has accepted; and his success in this matter is to be rejoiced in, first of all, because the suit has been settled conclusively. We have known cases go to arbitration, and yet the parties have quarrelled afterwards; they have said that the arbitrator did not rule justly, or something of the kind, and so the whole point has been raised again. But O beloved, the case between a saved soul and God is settled once and for

ever. There is no more conscience of sin left in the believer; and as for God's Book, there is not a sin recorded there against any soul that has received Christ. I know some of our Arminian brethren rather think that the case is not settled; or they suppose that the case is settled for a time, but that it will one day come up again. Beloved, I thank God that they are mistaken. Christ has not cast his people's sins into the shallows, where they may be washed up again, but he has cast them into the depths of the sea, where they are drowned for ever. Our scape-goat has not carried our sins to the borders of the land, where they may be found again, but he has taken them away into the wilderness where, if they be searched for, they shall not be found. The case is so settled that in eternity you shall never hear of it again except as a case which was gloriously decided.

Again, the case has been settled on the best principles, because, you see, neither party can possibly quarrel with the decision. The sinner cannot, for it is all mercy to him: even eternal justice cannot, for it has had its due. If there had been any mitigation of the penalty, we might yet fear that perhaps the suit might come up again; but now that everything has been paid, that cannot be. If my creditor takes from me, by a settlement in the Court of Insolvency, ten shillings in the pound, I know he will not disturb me yet; but I cannot feel quite at ease about the other ten shillings; and if I am ever able, I should like to pay him. But, you see, Christ has not paid ten shillings in the pound, but he has paid every farthing.

***“Justice now demands no more,  
He has paid the dreadful score.”***

For all the sins of all his people he has made such a full and satisfactory atonement, that divine justice were not divine justice at all if it should ask to be paid twice for the same offense. Christ has suffered the law's fullest and severest penalty, and there is now no fear whatever that the case can ever be revived, by writ of error, or removal into another court, because it has been settled on the eternal and immutable principles of justice.

Again, the case has been so settled, that both parties are well content. You never hear a saved soul murmur at the substitution of the Lord Jesus. If ever I get to see his face, I'll fall down before him and kiss the dust beneath his feet. Oh! if ever I see the Savior who has thus delivered me from ruin; if I have a crown I will cast it at his feet, and never, never wear it; it must, it shall be his. I feel like the good woman who said, that if Christ ever saved her, he should never hear the last of it; and I am sure he never shall, for I

will praise him as long as immortality endures, for what he has done for me. I am sure that every saved sinner feels the same. And Jehovah, on the other side, is perfectly content. He is satisfied with his dear Son. "Well done!" he saith to him. He has received him to the throne of glory, and made him to sit at his right hand, because he is perfectly content with the great work which he has accomplished.

But, what is more and more wonderful still, both parties have gained in the suit. Did you ever hear of such a law-suit as this before? No, never in the courts of man. The old story of the two oyster-shells, you know, awarded to the plaintiff and defendant, while the oyster is eaten in court, is generally the result; but it is not so in this ease, for both the plaintiff and the defendant have won by the arbitration. What has God gained? Why, glory to himself, and such glory as all creation could not give him, such glory as the ruin of sinners, though so well-deserved, could not give him. Hark how

*"Heaven's eternal arches ring  
With shouts of sovereign grace!"*

Angels, too, as well as those who have been redeemed, strike their harps. which they have turned afresh to a nobler strain, as they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb, and blessed is the eternal God!" And, as for us, the poor defendants, why, what have we not gained? We were men before; now we are something more than Adam was. We were "a little lower than the angels" before, but now we are "lifted up far above all principalities and powers." We were God's subjects once, but this arbitration has made us his sons. We were at our very best only the possessors of a paradise on earth, but now we are joint-heirs with Christ of a paradise above the skies. Both sides have won, and both sides must therefore be blessedly content with their glorious Daysman.

And, to conclude, through this Daysman both parties have come to be united in the strongest, closest, dearest, and fondest bond of union. This law-suit has ended in such a way that the plaintiff and the defendant are friends for life, nay, friends through death, and friends in eternity. how near God is to a pardoned sinner,

*"So near, so very near to God,  
Nearer we cannot be;  
For in the person of his Son,  
We are as near as he."*

What a wonderful thing is that union between God and the sinner! We have all been thinking a great deal lately about the Atlantic Cable. It is a very interesting attempt to join two worlds together. That poor cable, you know, has had to be sunk into the depths of the sea, in the hope of establishing a union between the two worlds, and now we are disappointed again. But oh! what an infinitely greater wonder has been accomplished. Christ Jesus saw the two worlds divided, and the great Atlantic of human guilt rolled between. He sank down deep into the woes of man till all God's waves and billows had gone over him, that he might be, as it were, the great telegraphic communication between God and the apostate race, between the Most Holy One and poor sinners. Let me say to you, sinner, there was no failure in the laying down of that blessed cable. It went down deep; the end was well secured, and it went down deep into the depths of our sin, and shame, and woe; and on the other side it has gone right up to the eternal throne, and is fastened there eternally fast, by God himself. You may work that telegraph to-day, and you may easily understand the art of working it too. A sigh will work it; a tear will work it. Say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and along the wire the message will flash, and will reach God before it comes from you. It is swifter far than earthly telegraphs; ay, and there will come an answer back much sooner than you ever dream of, for it is promised—"Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." Who ever heard of such a communication as this between man and man; but it really does exist between sinners and God, since Christ has opened up a way from the depths of our sin to the heights of his glory.

This is for you who are at a distance from him, but he has done more for us who are saved, for he has taken us right across the Atlantic of our sin and set us down on the other side; he has taken us out of our sinful state, and put us into the Father's bosom, and there we shall dwell for ever in the heart of God as his own dear children.

I would to God that some might now be led to look to the Savior, that some would come with weeping and with tears to him, and say,

*“Jesus lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly.”*

Take my case, and arbitrate for me; I accept thine atonement; I trust in thy precious blood; only receive me and I will rejoice in thee for ever with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

May the Lord bless you evermore. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.-Isaiah 53.***

# CONSOLATION IN THE FURNACE.

NO. 662

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 26TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”- Daniel 3:25.

THE narrative of the glorious boldness and marvellous deliverance of the three holy children, or rather champions, is well calculated to excite in the minds of believers firmness and stedfastness in upholding the truth in the teeth of tyranny and in the very jaws of death. Let young men especially, since these were young men, learn from their example both in matters of faith in religion, and matters of integrity in business, never to sacrifice their consciences. Lose all rather than lose your integrity, and when all else is gone, still hold fast a clear conscience as the rarest jewel which can adorn the bosom of a mortal. It were no waste of time for the preacher to spend half-a-dozen mornings in insisting again and again upon the necessity of the Christian being obedient universally and constantly to the dictates of his conscience, for this is an age requiring sturdy independence and stern adherence to the truth. As to whether the severest precision of integrity will turn out to be the best policy or no, I shall not care to dispute; I am talking just now, not to men guided by the will-o'-the-wisp of policy, but by the pole star of divine light, and I beseech them to follow the right at all hazards. When you see no present advantage, then walk by faith and not by sight. I do pray you, beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, do my God the honor to trust him when it comes to matters of loss for the sake of principle. See whether he will be your debtor! See if he doth not even in this life prove his word, that “Godliness is great gain,” and that they who

“seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, shall have all these things added unto them.” Mark you, if in the providence of God it should be the case that you are, and continue to be a loser by conscience, you shall find that if the Lord pays you not back in the silver of earthly prosperity, he will discharge his promise in the gold of spiritual joy, and I would have you remember that a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of that which he possesseth. To have a clear conscience, to wear a guileless spirit, to have a heart void of offense, is greater riches than the mines of Ophir could yield or the traffic of Tyre could win. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and inward contention therewith. An ounce of heart’s-ease is worth a ton of gold; and a drop of innocence is better than a sea of flattery. Burn, Christian, if it comes to that, but never turn from the right way. Die, but never deny the truth. Lose all to buy the truth; but sell it not, even though the price were the treasure and honor of the whole world, for “what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

But my particular design in referring to the narrative this morning, was not to use the whole of it as an incentive to young Christians, by way of earnest advice, although I confess I feel much inclined to do so; but I have this one verse on my mind, wherein the astonished despot saw his late victims quietly surviving the flames which he intended for their instant destruction. I desire to use his exclamation as a consolation to afflicted Christians everywhere. Concentrate then your thoughts on the words before us, and may the Holy Spirit be our instructor.

**I.** We will commence by gazing into the place WHERE GOD’S PEOPLE OFTEN ARE.

In the text we find three of them in a burning fiery furnace, and singular as this may be literally, it is no extraordinary thing spiritually, for, to say the truth, it is the usual place where the saints are found. The ancients fabled of the salamander that it lived in the fire; the same can be said of the Christian without any fable whatever. The ancient Church used, in a favourite metaphor, to describe itself as a ship; where should the ship be, but in the sea? Now the sea is an unstable clement, frequently vexed with storms; it is a troubled sea which cannot rest; and so the Christian finds this mortal life to be far from smooth and seldom settled. It is rather a wonder when a Christian is not in trial, for to wanderers in a wilderness discomfort and privation will naturally be the rule rather than the exception. It is through

“much tribulation” that we inherit the kingdom. There is no life so joyous as that of a man bound for the Celestial city; and, on the other hand, there is no life which involves so much conflict as does the life of a pilgrim to the skies. The furnaces into which Christians are cast are of various sorts. Perhaps we may divide them into three groups.

First, there is the furnace which men kindle. As if there were not enough misery in the world, men are the greatest tormentors to their fellow-men. The elements in all their fury, wild beasts in all their ferocity, and famine and pestilence in all their horrors, have scarcely proved such foes to man, as men themselves have been. Religious animosity is always the worst of all hatreds, and incites to the most fiendish deeds; persecution is as unsparing as death, and as cruel as the grave. The believer in Jesus, who is one of a people everywhere spoken against, must expect to be thrown into the furnace of persecution by his fellowmen. “If the world hate y on,” saith our Lord, “it hated me before it hated you.” “If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Some suppose that these words are out of date—old-fashioned words, words that refer only to apostolic times. I answer, you are out of the apostolic faith, or else you would painfully find them to be still standing in all their force. At times the Christian feels the heat of the furnace of open persecution. What multitudes of saints have mounted to heaven like Elias, in a chariot of fire; their seraphic spirits found a safe way to heaven through the flames, for they were guarded by ministering spirits whom God hath made as flames of fire. Thousands of the precious sons of Zion have been left to rot in the dungeon, or have been slain upon the mountain side, or have perished in penury and want; and to this day there be many that endure trials of cruel mockings, and are in divers painful ways made to bear the cross, for if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he must suffer persecution. Another furnace is that of oppression. In the iron furnace of Egypt the children of Israel were made to do hard bondage in brick and in mortar; and doubtless many of God’s people are in positions where they are little better than slaves. Oppression is far from dead; under the freest form of government there is always a possibility for the heads of households and the masters of establishments to practice the most galling oppression towards those whom they dislike; and doubtless many choice spirits are still trodden down as straw is trodden for the dunghill. There is also the furnace of slander. The ripest of fruit will be pecked at most by the birds; those who have most of



God's image will have most of the world's contempt. Expect not that the world shall speak well of thee, for it never gave thy Master a good word. "Shall the disciple be above his master, or the servant above his Lord?" Expect to be misunderstood-that is man's infirmity; expect to be misrepresented-that is his wilful hatred. A very strenuous effort is making just now to mark our denomination with the famous "S. S.," which was the old brand of the Puritan "Sower of Sedition." This slander is very ancient, for in Nehemiah's day the accusation ran, "This city of Jerusalem of old made sedition against kings;" and this is the charge now against our missionaries, and indeed the whole of us, that we are accomplices with those who stir up the people to sedition. Sirs, we shall not disclaim the fact that we are ever swift to vindicate the liberties of all men, and are little given to flatter tyrants whether in Jamaica, or elsewhere; on the contrary, our witness is very loud and clear, that there is one Lord who will execute righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. We hate the treading down of the needy, and we abhor wholesale butchery quite as much when perpetrated by Englishmen as when laid to the door of Turks or Russians, and however unfashionable it may be, we maintain the opinion that liberty is the birthright of every man, not only the liberty which permits his neck to go free from a chain, but the liberty which allows the exercise of the rights of manhood. Suffering humanity is to be aided even when it wears the ebon hue, and high-handed wrong is to be impeached even when the much despised negro is its victim. It can never be too much lamented that the terrible passions excited by years of wrong should have led to a riot so fierce and cruel, but we must remember that oppression makes even wise men mad, and in justice we must lay the onus of the outbreak, not alone at the door of those unhappy and uneducated men who were goaded to this passionate display of wrath, but we must give the greatest measure of blame to the men of standing, wealth, and education, who have laid grievous burdens upon these people, and refused to hear their earnest cries and grant their justifiable demands. The infernal revenge taken by their enemies almost exonerates me from even this word of apology, for it alone is sufficient proof of the spirit which has dominated over the black race, and compelled the unhappy victims to rise against it. But of course it will still be insisted that the Baptists are at the bottom of the outbreak, and so God's Church will be the scapegoat for offenders. We are the friends of liberty, but we never taught rebellion; we endeavor to implant manly principles of independence and freedom, but we put side-by-side the gentle

precepts of the loving Jesus; yet scandals of every sort we expect to receive, and we count them no strange thing when they happen to us.

Secondly, there is a furnace which Satan blows with three great bellows - some of you have been in it. It is hard to bear, for the prince of the power of the air hath great mastery over human spirits; he knows our weak places, and can strike so as to cut us to the very quick. He fans the fire with the blast of temptation. The evil one knows our besetting sins, our infirmities of temper, and how we can be most readily provoked. He understandeth how to suit his bait to his fish, and his trap to his bird. At times the most earnest Christian will be compelled to cry out, "My steps had well nigh gone; my feet had well nigh slipped." The Savior went through this furnace in the wilderness, and was thrice tempted of the devil; and in the wilderness of this life God's people frequently experience temptations of the most horrible kind. Then he works the second bellows of accusation. He hisses into the ear, "Thy sins have destroyed thee! The Lord hath forsaken thee quite! Thy God will be gracious no more!" He tells us that we are hypocrites; that our experience has been fancy; that our faith is mere presumption; that our glorying has been a hectoring boast, and the very sins which, as a tempter, he himself incited us to commit, he brings against us when he assumes his favourite character of "the accuser of the brethren." Unless graciously comforted under the attacks of the roaring lion, we shall be almost ready to give up all hope. Then he will beset us with suggestions of blasphemy; for while tormenting us with insinuations, he has a way of uttering foul things against God, and then casting them into our hearts as if they were our own; he can sow the infernal seed of blasphemy in our souls, and then tell us that these are the native plants of our own hearts. He lays his black offspring at our door, as if they were our own home-born children; and this sometimes is very hard to bear, when curses against God and his Christ will come across our soul; and though we hate them with perfect hatred, yet we cannot be rid of them.

And thirdly, there is a furnace which God himself prepares for his people. There is the furnace of physical pain. How soon is the strong man brought low! We who rejoiced in health are in a few moments made to mourn and moan, not in weakness merely, but in pain and anguish. He only thinks little of pain who is a stranger to it. A furnace still worse perhaps is that of bereavement. The child sickens, the wife is gradually declining, the husband is smitten down with a stroke, friend after friend departs as star by star grows dim. We bitterly cry with Job, "Lover and friend hast thou put far

from me, and mine acquaintance unto darkness.” Then added to this there will crowd in upon us temporal losses and sufferings. The business which we thought would enrich, impoverishes. We build the house, but providence plucks it down with both its hands. We hoist the sail and seek to make headway; but we are driven by a back wind far from the desired haven. “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” I cannot multiply the description of these crosses which our heavenly Father in his mysterious providence lays upon his beloved ones. Certain is it that, like the waves of the sea, the drops of rain, the sands of the wilderness, and the leaves of the forest the griefs of the Lord’s people are innumerable. Into the central heat of the fire doth the Lord cast his saints, and mark you this, he casts them there because they are his own beloved and dearly loved people. I do not see the goldsmith putting dross into the furnace-what would be the good of it? It would be a waste of fuel and labor. But he thrusts the crucible full of gold into the hottest part of the fire and heaps on coals till the heat is terrible. Some of you have no crosses; you are like Moab, “settled on your lees;” “you are not emptied from vessel to vessel,” because ye are reprobate, and God careth not for you: but the pure gold is put into the furnace to make it purer still. As silver is purified in a furnace of earth seven times, simply because it is silver, so are saints afflicted because of their preciousness in the sight of the Lord. Men will not be at such pains to purify iron as they will with silver; for when iron is brought to a tolerable degree of purity it works well, but silver must be doubly refined, till no dross is left. Men do not cut common pebbles on the lapidary’s wheel, but the diamond must be vexed again, and again, and again with sharp cuttings, and even so must the believer.

The context reminds us that sometimes the Christian is exposed to very peculiar trials. The furnace was heated seven times hotter; it was hot enough when heated once; but I suppose that Nebuchadnezzar had pitch and tar, and all kinds of combustibles thrown in to make it flame out with greater vehemence. Truly at times the Lord appears to deal thus with his people. It is a peculiarly fierce heat which surrounds them, and they cry out, “Surely I am the man that hath seen affliction-I may take precedence of all others in the realm of sorrow.” This is not so, remember, for princes have sat in the king’s gate with their heads covered with ashes, and the best of men who eat bread at Jehovah’s table this day, have had to say, “Thou hast filled me with wormwood, and broken my teeth with gravel-stones.” The path of sorrow is well frequented, beaten down, and trodden by hosts

of the chosen ones of God, who have found that the path of sorrow, and that path alone, leads to the place where sorrow is unknown.

I do not like to leave this point without observing too, that these holy champions were helpless when thrown into the furnace. They were cast in bound; and many of us have been cast in bound, too, so that we could not lift hand or foot to help ourselves. They fell down, it is said, into the midst of the furnace; and often a sort of fainting fit overtakes the saints of God at the beginning of their trouble-the very trouble in which afterwards they can rejoice; for the present fills them with heaviness, and they fall down bound into the midst of the furnace. Pretty plight to be in! Who does not shudder at it! Certainly none of us would choose it; but we have not the choice, and as we have said with David, "Thou shalt choose mine inheritance for me," if the Lord determines to choose it for us among the coals of fire, it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. Where Jehovah places his saints they are safe in reality, although exposed to destruction in appearance. That is the first point then,-where God's people often are.

## **II.** We proceed to the second,-WHAT THEY LOSE THERE.

Look at the text, and it will be clear to you that they lost something Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego lost something in the fire,-not their turbans, nor their coats, nor their hosen, nor one hair of their heads or beards-no; what then? Why, they lost their bonds there. Do observe "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire." The fire did not hurt them, but it snapped their bonds. Blessed loss this! A true Christian's losses are gains in another shape. Now, beloved, observe this carefully, that many of God's servants never know the fullness of spiritual liberty till they are cast into the midst of the furnace. Many of them are bound and fettered till they get into the flame, and the flame consumes the bonds in which they had been willing to be held captives. Like the pure gold which loses nothing but its dross in the fire; like the iron which loses nothing but its rust under the file; so is the Christian-he loses what he is glad to lose, and his loss is blessed gain. Shall I show you some of the bonds which God looses for his people when they are in the tire of human hatred? Sometimes he bursts the cords of fear of man, and desire to please man. Martin Luther, I dare say, like other men, had some respect for his own character, and some reverence for public opinion, and might have been willing to pay some deference to the learning and authority of the age, both of which lent their aid to the ancient

system of Rome, but in a happy hour the Pope excommunicated the German troubler. All is well for Luther now. His course is clear, and plain before his face! He must henceforth never conciliate or dream of peace. Now his bonds are broken. He burns the Pope's bull and thunders out, "The Pope of Rome excommunicates Martin Luther, and I, Martin Luther, excommunicate the Pope of Rome. The world hates me, and there is no love lost between us, for I esteem it as much as it esteems me. War to the knife," says he. The man was never clear till the world thrust him out. It is a splendid thing to run the gauntlet of so much contempt, that the soul is hardened to it under a strong consciousness that the right is none the more contemptible because its friend may be despised. "Why," you say, "is this how I am treated for the statement of truth? I was inclined to conciliate and yield, but after this never! Thou hast loosed my bonds." When man has done his worst, as Nebuchadnezzar did in this case, why then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, could say, "What more could he do? He has thrown us into a fiery furnace heated seven times hotter; he has done his worst and now what have we to fear?" When persecution rages, it is wonderful what liberty it gives to the child of God. Never a freer tongue than Luther's! Never a braver mouth than that of John Knox! Never bolder speech than that of John Calvin! Never a braver heart than that which throbbed beneath the ribs of Wickliffe! Never a man who could more boldly confront popery than John Bradford or Hugh Latimer! but under God these men owed their liberty of speech and liberty of conscience to the fact that the world thrust them out from all hope of its favor, and so loosed their bonds.

Again, when Satan puts us in the furnace, he is often the means of breaking bonds. How many Christians are bound by the bonds of frames and feelings; the bonds of dependence upon something within, instead of resting upon Christ the great Sacrifice. When the devil comes with his sharp temptations, he roars out, "You are no children of God." Why, what then? Why, then we go straight away to Christ, to look at and view the flowing of his precious blood, and trust him just as we did at first; and now what about frames and feelings? What about emotions within? Why, we are so satisfied with that finished work upon the tree, that we feel the bonds of doubt and fear no more. Now we are free, because we have come to live on Christ, and not on self. Fierce temptations may be like waves that wash the mariner on a rock—they may drive us nearer to Christ. It is an ill wind which blows no one any good; but the worst wind that Satan can send

blows the Christian good, because it hurries him nearer to his Lord. Temptation is a great blessing when it looses our bonds of self-confidence and reliance upon frames and feelings.

As for the afflictions which God sends, do they not loose our bonds? Dear brethren, doubts and fears are far more common to us in the midst of work and business than when laid aside by sickness. I do not know how you have found it, but so it is, "When I am weak, then am I strong." Many believers smug most sweetly when providence clips their wings, or puts them in a cage; they are very mute, and their heart towards the Lord is very heavy till they are involved in trouble; and then their faith revives, their hope returns, their love glows, and they sing God's praises in the fire. Have not you, dear friends, frequently experienced that trouble cuts the cords which bind us to earth? When the Lord takes away a child, there is one tie less to fasten to the world, and one band more to draw towards heaven. God has loosed you from the bonds of idolatry by removing your darling. You cannot idolize your little one any more, for it is taken away. When money vanishes, and business all goes wrong, we frequent the prayer-meeting more, and the closet more, and read the Bible more—we are driven by all tribulation away from earth. If everything went well with us, we should begin to say, "Soul, take thine ease;" but when things go amiss with us, then we want to be gone. When the tree shakes the bird will not stop in the nest, but takes to its wings and mounts. Happy trouble that looses our care of earth! Give you a few days of sharp pain on a bed of sickness, and you will not love life so much as you now do; you will begin to say, "Let me be gone." Why, even selfishness makes you wish for that; then you can understand what David meant when he said his heart and his flesh cried out after God. It is hard to make the flesh cry out after God; but if you nip it well, turn the screw a little further, just stretch it on the rack a little more, the dumb earth-born flesh will begin to cry out that it may be away and leave the pain and sickness behind it.

Thus, I think, I have shown you, though very briefly, for time fails us, that the saints lose something in the furnace which they are glad to lose: they are cast in bound, but amid the glowing coals they are set at liberty.

### **III.** In the third place, WHAT SAINTS DO THERE.

"Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire." Walking! See those gardens so delightfully laid out with varying landscape, rippling fountains, blushing flowers, and odoriferous herbs, with quiet arbours

every here and there, and soft-reclining seats, and there with the voice of glee young men and maidens walk. See that fair prospect! Turn hither-a blazing furnace, so fiercely heated that the eyes feel as if scorched from their sockets as they look upon it; and the fervent heat comes pouring forth as though old Sol had found a house on earth; yet there are four men walking-walking at their ease; and there is greater joy as they walk among those sulphureous flames, greater mirth in their spirits, than in those young men and maidens who walk among the flowers. They are walking-it is a symbol of joy, of ease, of peace, of rest-not flitting like unquiet ghosts, as if they were disembodied spirits traversing the flame; but walking with real footsteps, treading on hot coals as though they were roses, and smelling the sulphureous flames as though they yielded nothing but aromatic perfume Enoch "walked with God." It is the Christian's pace, it is his general pace; he does sometimes run, but his general pace is walking with God, walking in the Spirit; and you see that these good men did not quicken their pace, and they did not slacken it-they continued to walk as they usually did; they had the same holy calm and peace of mind which they enjoyed elsewhere. Their walking shows not only their liberty, and their ease, and their pleasure, and their calm, but it shows their strength. Their sinews were not snapped, they were walking. Sometimes God's people, as Jacob at the brook Jabbok, halt on their thigh; but I think it is only a small trouble that lames believers; a greater trial will set them right again. A stream of trouble may almost overturn a believer; but a flood of trials will make him rise as the ark rose, nearer to heaven. These men had no limping gait, they were walking, walking in the midst of the fire Now, for the explanation of all this, turn to the biographies of any of God's saints. There is an old Scotch volume entitled, "Naphtali;" it is the lives of those people of God who hazarded their lives unto death in the high places of the field; now, if you read "Naphtali," you will find that the greatest joy that ever could have been known in this mortal life, was enjoyed by Covenanters among the mosses and banks, and on the hillsides of Scotland, There is another blessed old book, which used to be chained in the Churches side by side with the Bible-I mean "Foxe's Book of Martyrs;" every family ought to have a copy of it, illustrated with pictures for the children to look at; and if you read "Foxe's Book of Martyrs," you will see clearly that there was more joy in old Bonner's coal-hole, and in the Lollard's tower, than palaces of kings have known. The martyrs felt a heaven of joy while they were suffering a hell of pain. One Samuel was kept starving for weeks, having bread and water given him alternately-three

or four monthsful of bread one day, and no water; and the next day a few spoonsful of water, and no bread. After he had been a little time in such a state as that, he fell into a perfect Elysium of delight; he thought he heard an angel say to him, "Samuel, thou hast suffered thus painfully, and fasted, for the sake of thy Lord; thou shalt soon feast with him above: meanwhile thou shalt feast with him below in thy soul." Many and many a child of God has had an experience manifesting as clearly the lovingkindness of the Lord. Yes, they were walking in the midst of the furnace. See Paul and Silas with their feet in the stocks, and their poor bleeding backs on the hard stone damp floor of the Roman dungeon at Philippi, and yet they sing, and the prisoners hear them, Why, I think I would as soon have been with Paul and Silas, as with Peter when he was on the mountain; at any rate, the three holy children might have said to the fourth, who was their Comforter and Companion, what Peter said to his Lord-" Lord, it is good to be here; let us build three tabernacles, and dwell under the fiery roof of these boughs of flame; for it is happy to be where thou art, though it be in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace."

#### **IV.** In the fourth place, WHAT THEY DID NOT LOSE THERE.

The text says, "And they have no hurt." They did not lose anything there. But we may say of them first, their persons were not hurt. The child of God loses in the furnace nothing of himself that is worth keeping. He does not lose his spiritual life-that is immortal; he does not lose his graces-he gets them refined and multiplied, and the glitter of them is best seen by furnace-light. The gifts of God the Holy Ghost to the Christian are not taken away by the fiery hands of flame. The Christian does not lose his garments there. You see their hats, and their hosen, and their coats were not singed, nor was there the smell of fire upon them; and so with the Christian: his garment is the beauteous dress which Christ himself wrought out in his life, and which he dyed in the purple of his own blood. This is wrapt about the Christian as his imperishable mantle of glory and of beauty.

*"This sacred robe the same endures  
When ruined nature sinks in years;  
No age can change its glorious hue,  
The robe of Christ is ever new."*

As it is not hurt by age, nor moth, nor worm, nor mildew, so neither can it be touched by fire. When the saint shall come up to heaven, wearing



Christ's righteousness, and the question is asked, "Who are these?" as the spirits gather round them, there shall be no traces upon them whatever of any of the persecution or suffering through which they have been made to pass. The Christian never loses a grain of his treasure when he passes through the furnace-in fact, to sum up in a word, he loses nothing. The empress threatened to banish Chrysostom. "That thou canst not do," said he, "for my country is in every clime." "But I will take away thy goods." "No," said he, "that thou canst not do, for I am a poor minister of Christ, and I have none." "Then," said she, "I will take away your liberty." "That you cannot do, for iron bars cannot confine a free spirit." "I will take away your life," said she. "That you may do," said he, "in one sense, but I have a life eternal which you cannot touch." The empress thought she had better leave the man alone-she could do him no hurt. So is it better for the enemy to leave the child of God alone, for he that kicketh against God's people, only kicks with naked feet against the pricks; and as the ox smitten with the goad only hurts himself when he kicks against it, so shall it be with all who touch the saints of the living God. They are not hurt, and they never shall be. Now, it is hard for some of you to think that this will be the case, but thus it will be with all of you who truly put your trust in Jesus Christ. My brethren,. I know you dread that furnace-who would not?-but courage, courage, courage, the Lord who permits that furnace to be heated will preserve you in it, therefore be not dismayed! You would wish so to live as to have some tale to tell when you shall mount to heaven: you would not be silent there-coming to glory without any adventure to narrate before the throne. Now, you cannot be illustrious without conflict; you cannot be a conqueror without fighting; you cannot by any possibility have anything to witness to the glory of God unless you test and try the promises and the faithfulness of the Most High; and where can you do this except in the furnace of woe? Be of good courage, then.

*"The flames shall not hurt thee, I only design  
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine."*

**V.** The last and perhaps the most pleasing part of the text is, WHO WAS WITH THEM IN THE FURNACE.

There was a fourth, and he was so bright and glorious, that even the heathen eyes of Nebuchadnezzar could discern a supernatural lustre about him. "The fourth," he said, "is like the Son of God." What appearance Christ had put on I cannot tell, which was recognizable by that heathen

monarch; but I suppose that he appeared in a degree of that glory in which he showed himself to his servant John in the Apocalypse, and such was the excessive splendor and brightness, the God-like air that was about him, the flash of his eye and the splendor of his gait as he walked the fire with the other three, that even Nebuchadnezzar could not help saying he was like the Son of God. Beloved, you must go into the furnace if you would have the nearest and dearest dealings with Christ Jesus. Whenever the Lord appears, it is to his people when they are in a militant posture. Moses saw God at Horeb, but it was in a burning bush; Joshua saw him, but it was with a drawn sword in his hand, to show that his people are still a militant people; and here where the saints saw their Savior, it was as himself being in the furnace. The richest thought that a Christian perhaps can live upon is this, that Christ is in the furnace with him. When you suffer, Christ suffers. No member of the body can be pained without the head enduring its portion; and so you, a member of Christ's body, in every pain you feel, pain the head Christ Jesus. As Baxter says, "Christ takes us through no darker rooms than he went through before;" and one could improve upon it and say, "He takes us through no rooms so dark but what he is himself there in the darkness, and makes that darkness by his presence light, cheering and gladdening our hearts."

I know that to the worldling this seems a very poor comfort, but then if you have never drank this wine you cannot judge its flavour. if the King has never taken you into his banqueting house, and his banner over you has never been love; if he has never kissed you with the kisses of his mouth; if he has never said unto you, "I am thine and thou art mine," why you cannot be expected to know what you have not experienced; but he who has once drunk of the well of Bethlehem, would hazard his life that he might get a draught of it again; would be willing to go through the furnace though it were heated seventy thousand times hotter, that he might be able once more to see that Son of God, the fourth bright One who trod the glowing coals. The presence of Christ is the brightest joy beneath the stars. Oh! Christian, seek it; do not be content without it, and thou shall have it.

A very unhappy thought starts up and claims expression before we close our discourse. I do not like to close with it, and yet faithfulness requires me to utter it: what must it be to be cast into that fiery furnace without Christ in it! What must it be to dwell with everlasting burnings! One's heart beats high at the thought of the three poor men being thrown into that furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, with its flaming pitch and bitumen reaching upwards its

streamers of flame, as though it would set the heavens on a blaze; yet that fire could not touch the three children, it was not consuming fire. But, my hearers, be ye warned, there is one who is “a consuming fire,” and once let him flame forth in anger, and none can deliver you. “Our God,” we are told, “our God is a consuming fire.” The day cometh which shall burn as an oven, and the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble, and every soul on earth that believeth not in Christ Jesus, shall be cast into that furnace of fire; this is the second death. Beware, ye that forget God, lest the eternal fires of Tophet kindle upon you, for their flame searches the joints and marrow, and sets the soul upon a blaze with torment. For you, my hearers, who have listened to the gospel often, but heard it in vain, for you the furnace of divine wrath shall be heated seven times hotter, and you shall fall down bound into the midst of it, never to be loosed; and instead of having Christ then to be with you and to comfort you, you shall see him sitting on his throne, and his glance of lightning shall perpetually make that flame to burn more terrible, and yet more terrible. If you were thrown into Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace, it would be all over in a moment, not even your calcined bones would be found; but the soul never dies. The punishment of the wicked is of the same duration as the reward of the righteous. Justice will ever exist in the divine mind, and will ever have objects upon which to display itself. If the soul died, hell would not be hell, for there would then be hope; and so the most terrible element of hopelessness would be removed. Sinner, dream not of being annihilated, but dread the fire which never shall be quenched, the worm which never dies. It is written in God’s Word that he “is able to destroy both body and soul in hell,” a destruction which amounts not to annihilation, a destruction of everything that is true life, but which leaves existence still untouched,

*“What to be banished for my life,  
To linger in eternal pain  
And yet forbid to die;  
And yet for ever die!”*

Dreadful indeed is such a doom. There is a second death which will pass on all the ungodly, but it is not annihilation; for as death does not annihilate the body so does not the spiritual death annihilate the soul; you shall lose life but never existence, you shall linger in perpetual death. But there stands the Savior, and as he was with his people in the furnace, so he is near you this day in mercy, to deliver you from your sins. He calls to you to leave your sins and look to him, and then you shall never die, neither

upon you shall the flame of wrath kindle because its power was spent on him, and he felt the furnace of divine wrath, and trod the glowing coals for every soul that believeth in him. God give his blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-Daniel 3***

# WALKING IN THE LIGHT AND WASHED IN THE BLOOD.

NO. 663

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 3RD, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON.*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“But 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 cleanseth us from all sin.”- 1 John 1:7.

THERE are two great powers in conflict in this world. One is the power of good, of which God is the King, and the other is the power of evil, which is represented by the Prince of the power of the air, even Satan. The first principle is set forth by John under the figure of light. God himself is essential light, and everything which is good in the world is an emanation from himself. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” The light is the evident emblem of truth; darkness is the symbol of error. Light represents holiness; darkness is the appropriate figure for sin. Light represents knowledge, especially of spiritual things, since light reveals; darkness is the fit token of the ignorance under which the natural mind labors perpetually. By nature we are all born under the dominion of darkness: we grope our way like blind men, and when we knew God by the light of his works, we glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in our imaginations, and our foolish heart was darkened. Naturally, spiritual things are not discernible by man, they are spiritual and spiritually discerned, and the carnal mind cannot perceive them, for it walks in darkness. The guilt of sin is a thing too high for the carnal mind to understand; the glory of the eternal sacrifice it cannot perceive. The excellence of God, the faithfulness of his promise and the validity of his covenant, all such things as these are

swathed in mist, so that the carnal mind seeth them not. As soon as ever the grace of God comes into the heart, it makes as great a difference as did the eternal fiat of Jehovah, when he said, "Let there be light," and there was light. As soon as ever God the Holy Ghost begins to work upon the soul of man to illuminate him, he perceives at once his own sinfulness, he abhors that sinfulness, he labors to escape from it, he cries out for a remedy, he finds it in Christ; henceforth he no longer loves sin, he is not guided any longer by the darkness of policy, and selfishness and error, but he walks after the light of the truth of God, of righteousness, of holiness, of true knowledge. God has brought him into light: he sees now what he never saw before; knows, feels, believes, recognises what he never had known anything of aforetime—he is in the light. Hence you constantly find the Christian called a child of light, and he is warned that he is of the light and of the day. He is told, "Ye are not of the night nor of darkness." "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

You perceive in the text, then, that the Christian is spoken of as a man who is in the light; but there is something more said of him than this. He is practically in the light, "if we walk in the light." It is of no use to pretend to have light in the brain, so as to comprehend all knowledge, so as to be sound and orthodox in one's doctrinal opinions—this will be of no vital service, so far as the great point of salvation is concerned. A man may think he has much light, but if it be only notional and doctrinal, and is not the light which enlightens his nature and develops itself in his practical walk, he lies when he talks of being in the light, for he is in darkness altogether. Nor is it truthful to pretend or profess that we have light within in the form of experience if we do not walk in it, for where the light is true, it is quite certain to show itself abroad. If there be a candle within the lantern its light will stream forth into the surrounding darkness, and those who have eyes will be able to see it. I have no right to say I have light, unless I walk in it.

The apostle is very peremptory with those who so speak. He says, "He that saith I know him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." The Christian, then, is in the light, and he is practically in it; his walk and conversation are regulated by truth, by holiness, and by that divine knowledge which God has been pleased to bestow upon him. He walks in the light of faith, in another path than that which is trodden by men who have nothing but the light of sense. He sees Him who is invisible,

and the sight of the invisible God operates upon his soul; he looks into eternity, he marks the dread reward of sin, and the blessed gift of God to those who trust in Jesus, and eternal realities have an effect upon his whole manner and conversation: hence he is a man in the light, walking in that light.

There is a very strong description given here—"If we walk in the light as He is in the light." Beloved, the thought of that dazzles me. I have tried to look it in the face, but I cannot endure it. If we walk in the light as God is in the light. Can we ever attain to this? Shall poor flesh and blood ever be able to walk as clearly in the light as He is whom we call "Our Father," of whom it is written "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Let us say this much, and then commend this wonderful expression to your meditations. Certainly, this is the model which is set before us, for the Savior himself said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect;" and if we take anything short of absolute perfection as our model of life, we shall certainly, even if we should attain to our ideal, fall short of the glory of God. Beloved, when a schoolmaster writes the copy at the head of the page, he does not expect that the boy will come up to the copy; but then if the copy be not a perfect one, it is not fit to be imitated by a child; and so our God gives us himself as the pattern and copy, "Be ye imitators of God as dear children," for nothing short of himself would be a worthy model. Though we as life-sculptors may feel that we can never rival the perfection of God, yet we are to seek after it, and never to be satisfied until we attain to it. The youthful artist, as he grasps his early pencil, can hardly hope to equal Raphael or Michael Angelo, but still, if he did not have a noble beau ideal before his mind, he would only attain to something very mean and ordinary. Heavenly fingers point us to the Lord Jesus as the great exemplar of his people, and the Holy Spirit works in us a likeness to Him.

But what does it mean, that the Christian is to walk in light as God is in the light? We conceive it to import likeness, but not degree. We are as truly in the light, we are as heartily in the light, we are as sincerely in the light, as honestly in the light, though we cannot be there in the same degree. I cannot dwell in the sun, it is too bright a place for my residence, unless I shall be transformed, like Uriel, Milton's angel, who could dwell in the midst of the blaze of its excessive glory, but I can walk in the light of the sun though I cannot dwell in it; and so God is the light, he is himself the sun, and I can walk in the light as he is in the light, though I cannot attain

to the same degree of perfection, and excellence, and purity, and truth, in which the Lord himself resides. Trapp is always for giving us truth in a way in which we can remember it, so he says we are to be in the light as God is in the light for quality, but not for equality; we are to have the same light and as truly to have it and walk in it as God does, though as for equality with God in his holiness and perfection-that must be left until we cross the Jordan and enter into the perfection of the Most High.

Having thus briefly sketched the character of the genuine Christian, observe, beloved, that he is the possessor of two privileges; the first is, fellowship with God. "We have fellowship one with another;" and the second is, complete cleansing from sin-"and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The first privilege we will have but a word upon; it is fellowship with God. As you read this verse in our translation, it looks very much as if all that was meant was fellowship with your brother Christians; but this, according to able critics, would not convey the sense of the original. The Arabic version renders it, "God with us, and we with him," and several copies read, "we have fellowship with him." Our version almost compels you to think of fellowship with other believers, but such is not the intention of the Spirit. "We have mutual fellowship, between God and our souls there is communion;" this is the sense of the passage. God is light: we walk in light-we agree. "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?" It is clear we are agreed as to the principles which we shall advance: God is the champion of truth, so are we; God is the promoter of holiness, so are we. God seeks that love may reign instead of selfishness, so does the Christian. God hates error, and spares no arrows to destroy it. The Christian also contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. God is pure, and the pure in heart shall see God. God is holiness, and those who are holy are attracted to God from an affinity of nature, even as the needle is attracted to its pole. If the Lord has visited thee and made thee to walk in light, thou shalt surely have fellowship with God thy Father. He that is in darkness cannot have fellowship with God. Veiled in ignorance, guided by passion, controlled by error, led astray by falsehood, how canst thou aspire to talk with thy God? Thy prayer is but a chattering sound; thy song is the clang of a sounding brass, the noise of a tinkling cymbal; thy devotion bears thee no further than the letter which killeth; but oh, poor soul, if God should take thee out of thy darkness and make thee to see thyself, to see him and follow after truth and righteousness and holiness, why then thy



prayer would be heard in heaven, thy song would mingle with the sweet notes of celestial harps, and even thy groans and tears would reach thy Father's heart, for thou wouldst enjoy fellowship with him. If we walk with God as God is in the light, the secret of God is with us, and our secret is with God. He opens his heart to us and we open our heart to him: we become friends: we are bound and knit together, so that being made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, we lived like Enoch, having our conversation above the skies.

Upon the second privilege we intend to dwell. I have been driven to this text, and yet I have been afraid of it. This text has been handled, the latter part of it I mean, very often out of its connection. Yet it has had such a comforting influence on many souls, that I have been half afraid to discourse upon it in its connection, and yet I have felt, "Well, if anything I should say should take away any comfort from any seeking soul, I shall be very sorry, but I cannot help it." I do feel that it is essential to the Christian ministry not to pick passages out of God's Word and rend them away from the connection, but to take them as they stand. As this text stands, it does not seem to me to gleam with the particular ray of comfort which others see in it, but it has another beam of joy even more radiant. God's Word must be taken as God speaks it: we have no right to divide the living child of divine truth, or wrest it to make it mean other than it does. According to the text, special pardon of sin is the peculiar privilege of those who walk in the light as God is in the light, and it is not the privilege of any one else. Only those who have been brought by divine grace from a state of nature into a state of grace, and walk in the light, may claim the possession of perfect cleansing through the blood of Jesus Christ.

In dwelling upon this latter part of the verse, there seemed to me to be seven things in it, which any thoughtful reader would be struck with. Considered as the privilege of every man who, however limply, is walking in the light, this word, which tells of pardon bought with blood, is very precious, a crown set with jewels; to seven choice pearls I invite your loving gaze.

**1.** The first thing that struck me was THE GREATNESS of everything in the text.

In some places everything is little: you talk with some men-their thoughts, their ideas are all little; almost everything is drawn to a scale, and aspiring

minds generally draw their matters to as great a scale as they can find, but that is necessarily a little one. See to what a magnificent scale everything is drawn in our text! Think, beloved, how great the sin of God's people is! Will you try and get that thought into your minds, how great is your own sin-your sin before conversion,-think that over-your sin while seeking the Lord, in putting confidence in your own works and looking after refuges of lies. Your sins since conversion-turn them over. Beloved, one sin towers up like an Alp, but we have many sins heaped upon each other, as in the old fable of the giants who piled Pelion upon Ossa, mountain upon mountain. O God! what an aggregate of sin is there in the life of one of thy most pure and most sanctified children! Multiply this; all the sin of one child of God-multiply it by the number of those contained in that word "us," "cleanseth us from all sin! How many are God's children? God's Word shall answer. "A number that no man can number, out of all kindreds and peoples and tongues stood before the throne." Can you imagine-deep as hell's bottomless pit; high as heaven's own glory, for sin sought to pluck even God out of his throne; wide as the east is from the west; long as eternity is this great mass of the guilt of the people for whom Christ shed his blood. And yet all this is taken away. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Then observe the greatness of the atonement offered. Will you inwardly digest those words, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son"? Blood is at all times precious, but this is no blood of a mere man: it is the blood of an innocent man-better still, it is the blood of man in union with Deity-"His Son!" God's Son! Why! angels cast their crowns before him! All the choral symphonies of heaven surround his glorious throne. "God over all, blessed for ever. Amen." And yet he yields his blood; takes upon himself the form of a servant, and then is scourged and pierced, bruised and torn, and at last slain; for nothing but the blood of Deity could make atonement for human sin must be no man, merely; it must be the God-man mediator, the fellow of Jehovah, co-equal and co-eternal with him, who must bear the pangs and bitterness of divine wrath which was due to sin. Think of this- a sacrifice truly, which no human mind can ever properly estimate in the infinity of its value. Here indeed we have greatness-great sin, but a great atonement.

Think again: we have here great love which provided such a sacrifice. Oh, how he must have loved, to have descended from heaven to earth, and from earth to the grave! How he must have loved to have chosen us, when

we were hating him-when we were enemies, he hath reconciled us unto God by his own death. Dead in trespasses and sins, corrupt. wrapped up in the cerements of evil habits, hateful and hating one another, full of sin and every abomination, yet he loved us so as to yield up his soul unto death for us. We are dealing with great things here indeed, and we must not forget the greatness of the influence which such an atonement, the result of such love, must have upon the Christian's heart. Oh, the greatness of the peace which passeth all understanding, which flows from this great atonement! Oh, the greatness of the gratitude which must blaze forth from such a sacred fire as this! Oh, the greatness of the hatred of sin, of the revenge against iniquity, which must spring from a sense of such love, when it is shed abroad in the heart! Ye are citizens enjoying no mean privilege, oh ye blood-bought citizens of a blood-bought city. God has loved you. Ye cannot, though I should allot you a whole life-time-ye cannot get to the depth of that love God has loved you, and to prove his love he has died in the person of man for you. He loves you, and has overcome the dread result of all your fearful sin; and now, by the love which God has manifested, we do pray you let your holiness, your truthfulness, and your zeal, prove that you understand the greatness of those things. If your heart can really conceive the greatness of the things here revealed, the great sin, the great Savior offering him self out of great love, that he might make you to be greatly privileged, I am sure your hearts will rejoice.

**2.** The next thing which sparkles in the text, is its SIMPLE SOLITARINESS: "We have fellowship one with another;" and then it is added, as a simple, gloriously simple statement, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Observe, here is nothing said about rites and ceremonies. It does not begin by saying, "and the waters of baptism, together with the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us,"-not a word, whether it shall be the sprinkling in infancy, or immersion of believers, nothing is said about it-it is the blood, the blood only, without a drop of baptismal water. Nothing is here said about sacraments-what some call "the blessed Eucharist" is not dragged in here-nothing about eating bread and drinking wine-it is the blood, nothing but the blood-"the blood of Jesus Christ his Son." And if nothing is said of rites that God has given, rites that man has invented are equally excluded. Not a syllable is uttered concerning celibacy or monasticism, not a breath about vows of perpetual chastity and poverty, not a hint about confession to a priest and human absolution, not an allusion to penance or extreme unction. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son

cleanseth us from all sin.” It was well done by a poor woman, who as she lay sick, heard for the first time the precious gospel of her salvation. She was told that the blood alone cleansed from sin; she believed, and then, putting her hand into her bosom, she took out a little crucifix which she had always worn, hanging from a chain about her neck, and said to the preacher, “Then I don’t want this, sir.” Ah, truly so, and so may we say of everything that man has devised as a consolation to a poor wounded spirit. “I have found, Jesus, and I do not want that, sir.” You who want it, keep it; but as for us, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son so completely purgeth us from all sin, that we dare not look to anything else, lest we come into the bondage of the beggarly elements of this world. You will perceive, too, that nothing is said about Christian experience as a means of cleansing. What, says one, do not the first sentences of the verse imply that? Assuredly not, for you perceive that the first sentence of the verse does not interfere, though it is linked, with the other. If I walk in the light as God is in the light, what then? Does my walking in the light take away my sins? Not at all. I am as much a sinner in the light as in the darkness, if it were possible for me to be in the light without being washed in the blood. Well, but we have fellowship with God, and does not having fellowship with God take away sin? Beloved, do not misunderstand me-no man can have fellowship with God unless sin be taken away; but his fellowship with God, and his walking in light, does not take away his sin-not at all. The whole process of the removal of sin is here, “And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” I beg to repeat it-the text does not say that our walking in the light cleanseth us from sin, it does not say that our having fellowship with God cleanses us from sin-these go with cleansing, but they have no connection as cause and result-it is the blood, and the blood alone which purges us from sin. The dying thief looked to Christ, and sin was taken away by the blood; and there is a brother in Christ here, who has had such an experience of Christ’s love for sixty years that his heart is now like a shock of corn, ripe for heaven; he lives in his Master’s presence, he spends the most of his time in his Master’s service; but, beloved, there is not a single atom of difference between him and the dying thief, so far as the cleansing away of sin is concerned. The blood cleansed the thief, and the same blood washes this advanced and full-grown Christian, or otherwise he is still unclean.

Observe, yet again, that in the verse there is no hint given of any emotions, feelings, or attainments, as co-operating with the blood to take away sin.

Christ took the sins of his people and was punished for those sins as if he had been himself a sinner, and so sin is taken away from us; but in no sense, degree, shape or form, is sin removed by attainments, emotions, feelings or experiences. The blood is the alone atonement, the blood without any mixture of aught beside, completes and finishes the work, "For ye are complete in him."

Now I could enlarge for a very long time on this point, but I do not think I shall, I will rather throw into a sentence or two a little direction, and observe that whereas there are some who urge you to look to your doctrinal intelligence as a ground of comfort, I beseech you beloved, look only to the blood; whereas there are others who would set up a standard of Christian experience and urge that this is to be the channel of your consolation, I pray you, while you prize both doctrine and experience, rest nowhere your soul's weight but in the precious blood. Some would lead you to high degrees of fellowship; follow them, but not when they would lead you away from the simple position of a sinner resting upon the blood, There be those who could teach you mysticism, and would have you rejoice in the light within; follow them as far as they have the warrant of God's Word, but never take your foot from that Rock of Ages, where the only safe standing can be found. Certain of my brethren are very fond of preaching Christ in his second advent-I rejoice wherein they preach the truth concerning Christ glorified, but my beloved, I do conjure you do not build your hope on Christ glorified, nor on Christ to come, but on "Christ crucified." Remember that in the matter of taking away sin, the first thing is not the throne, but the cross; not the reigning Savior, but the bleeding Savior; not the King in his glory, but the Redeemer in his shame. Care not to be studying dates of prophecies if burdened with sin, but seek your chief, your best comfort in the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth us from all sin: here is the pole star of your salvation, sail by it and you shall reach the port of peace.

**3.** A third brilliant flashes in the light, viz., THE COMPLETENESS of the cleansing. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,"-not from some sin, but "from all sin." Beloved, I cannot tell you the exceeding sweetness of this word, but I pray God the Holy Ghost to give you a taste of it. There is original sin, by which we fell in Adam before we were born, and inherited sin through which we were born in sin and shapen in iniquity; there is actual sin-the sin of my youth and my former transgressions, the sins of my riper years, the sins which defile the hoary

head and make that which should be a crown of glory to be a crown of grief-but all these sins original and actual are all gone! all gone! Sins against the law, though it be exceeding broad, so that it makes me a sinner in thought, in word, in deed, in heart-all gone. Sins against the gospel, when I kicked against the pricks, when I stifled conscience, when I resisted the Holy Ghost as did also my fathers, when I hated the truth and would not have it because my deeds were evil, and I would not come to the light lest my deeds might be reproved; when I would regard none of the sweet invitations of the gospel-all cleansed away! Sins against Christ Jesus since my conversion when I have backslidden and my heart has been cold towards him; sins against the Holy Spirit when I have followed my own impulses instead of the indwelling Deity, -all gone! The Roman Catholic divides sin into sins venial and sins mortal, Be it so-the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin, mortal or venial, deadly or pardonable. Sins of commission-here is a long catalogue-think it over; sins of omission-that is a larger list still. The things which we have left undone which we ought to have done, are probably more numerous than the things which we have done which we ought not to have done-but all are gone. Some sins are greater than others; there is no doubt whatever that adultery, fornication, murder, blasphemy, and such like are greater than the sins of daily life, but whether they be great sins or little sins, they are all gone. That same God who took away the plague of flies from Egypt also took away the plague of thunder and of lightning. All are gone-gone at once. Pharaoh's chariot is drowned in the Red Sea, and the meanest Egyptian is drowned in the self-same way. The depths have covered them; there is not one of them left. There are sins against God-how many are these! Sins of breaking his day and despising his word; profaning his name, forgetting him and not loving him-but He blots out all! Sins against my friends and my enemies, against my neighbor, against my father, my child, my husband-sins in all relationships-yet all are gone! Then, too, remember there are sins of presumption, and sins of ignorance; sins done wilfully, and unknown sins; but the blood cleanseth us from all sin. Shall I enlarge? Surely I need not; but you see the purging is complete. Whether the bill be little or the bill be great, the same receipt can discharge one as the other. The blood of Jesus Christ is as blessed and divine a payment for the sin of blaspheming Peter as it is for the sin of loving John, and our iniquity is gone, all gone at once and all gone for ever. Blessed completeness! What a sweet theme to dwell upon!

**4.** The next gem that studs the text is the thought of PRESENTNESS. "Cleanseth" says the text-not "shall cleanse." There are multitudes who think that as a dying hope they may look forward to pardon, and perhaps within a few hours of their dissolution they may be able to say, "My sins are pardoned." Such can never have read God's Word, or, if they have read it, they have read it with unbelieving eyes. Beloved, I would not give the snap of my finger for the bare possibility of cleansing when I come to die. Oh how infinitely better to have cleansing now! Some imagine that a sense of pardon is an attainment after many years of Christian experience. For a young Christian to say, "My sins are forgiven," seems to them to be an untimely fig, ripe too soon; but, beloved, it is not so. The moment a sinner trusts Jesus, that sinner is as fully forgiven as he will be when the light of the glory of God shall shine upon his resurrection countenance. Beloved, forgiveness of sin is a present thing-a privilege for this day, a joy for this very hour; and whosoever walks in the light as God is in the light has fellowship with God, and has at this moment the perfect pardon of sin.

You perceive that it is written in the present tense as if to indicate continuance: it will always be so with you, Christian. It was so yesterday-it was "cleanseth" yesterday, it is "cleanseth" to-day: it will be "cleanseth" to-morrow: it will be "cleanseth" until you cross the river-every day you may come to this fountain for it "cleanseth!" Every hour you may stand by its brim, for it "cleanseth." I think there is sanctification here as well as justification. I am inclined to believe that this text has been too much limited in its interpretation, and that it signifies that the blood of Jesus is constantly operating upon the man who walks in the light so as to cleanse him from the indwelling power of sin; and the Spirit of God applies the doctrine of the atonement to the production of purity, till the soul becomes completely pure from sin at the last. I desire to feel every day the constantly purifying effect of the sacrifice of my Lord and Master. Look at the foot of the cross, and I am sure you will feel that the precious drops cleanse from all sin.

**5.** Now in the fifth place, the text presents to us very blessedly the thought of CERTAINTY. It is not "perhaps the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from sin," the text speaks of it as a fact not to be disputed, it does do so. To the believer this is matter of certainty, for the Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirits that we are born of God. Our spirit in the joy and peace which it receives through believing, becomes assured of its being cleansed, and then the Spirit of God comes in as a second witness and bears witness

with our spirit that we are born of God. My being cleansed from all sin to-day is to me as much a matter of consciousness, as my being better in health. I was conscious of pain when I lay on my sick bed, and so when I was living in sin as soon as God gave me spiritual life, I was conscious that guilt lay heavily upon me; I am conscious now of pain removed, and so I am equally conscious of sin removed, and I do not hesitate to say it here, that my consciousness of pardoned sin is at this moment as clear and as distinct as my consciousness of removed pain, while I look at Jesus Christ my Lord by faith. So is it often with the Christian. It is frequently with him a matter of consciousness most positive and infallible that he is truly and really cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ and it is not merely a matter of consciousness, but if you think of it, it is a matter of reasoning. If Jesus Christ did indeed take the sins of all who believe, then it follows necessarily that I trusting in Christ have no longer any sin, for if Christ took my sin, sin cannot be in two places at once. If Christ bears it then I do not bear it; and if Christ was punished for it, then the punishment of my sin has been endured, and I cannot be punished for the sin for which Jesus has been punished, unless God should sovereignly punish men, which would be such an insult to the honesty and justice of God, that it must not be tolerated for a moment in our thoughts. If Jesus Christ has paid the debt it is paid, and-

*“Justice can demand no more,  
Christ has paid the dreadful score.”*

So the Christian's being cleansed from sin becomes to him a matter of spiritual argument: he can see it clearly and manifestly.

Yet more, he is so certain of it that it begins to operate upon him in blessed effect. He is so sure that there is no sin laid to his door that he draws nearer to God than a sinner may do defiled with sin. He enters into that which is within the veil: he talks with God as his father; he claims familiar intercourse with the Most High God; and though God be so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, yet he believes that that same God lives in his heart as in a temple. Now this he could not feel if he did not know that sin is put away. Beloved, no man is capable of virtue in the highest sense of the term till it is a matter of certainty to him that his sin is cleansed. You say “That is a strong assertion,” but I do assert it-all of you who are doing good works with the view to saving yourselves are missing the mark of pure virtue. You say” Why?” The goodness of an action



depends upon its motive; your motive is to save yourselves-that is selfish; your action is selfish, and the virtue of it has evaporated, But the Christian, when he performs good works, does not perform them with any view whatever of merit or self salvation. "I am saved," saith he- "perfectly saved. I have not a sin in God's book against me-I am clean. Great God, before thy bar I am clean through Jesus Christ.

*'Loved of my God for him again  
With love intense I burn.'*

What can I do to prove to all mankind how much, how truly I love my God?" You see then that this must be a matter of certainty, or else it will never have its right effect upon you; and I pray God that you may suck the certainty out of this text and taste its sweetness to your own soul's inward contentment, and be able to say, "Yes, without a doubt, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

**6.** I hope I shall not weary you, but a few words upon the sixth gem which adorns the text, namely, the DIVINITY of it. "Where?" saith one. Does not divinity gleam in this text? Does it not strike you that the verse is written in a God-like style? The God-like style is very peculiar. You can tell the style of Milton from the style of Wordsworth, or the style of Byron. Read a verse and an educated person knows the author by the ring of the sentences. The God-like style is unique in its excellence. You need never put the name at the bottom when the writing is of the Lord. You know it by the very style of it. "Light be! Light was." Who speaks like that but Deity? Now there is a divine ring about this sentence; "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." Why if man were talking of so great an atonement he would fetch a compass; he would have to go round about. We cannot afford to say such great things as these in a few words; we must adopt some form of speech that would allow us to extol the truth and indicate its beauties. God seems to put away his pearls as if they were but common pebbles. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"-as if it were as much a matter of every-day work as for a man to wash his hands.

Notice the simplicity of the whole process. It does not seem to take weeks or months, it is done at once. Slowly and by degrees is man's action-we must lay the thing to soak, to fetch the color from it, subject it to many processes, and expose it to the wind, and rain, and frost, and sun, before it can be cleansed. But here God speaks and it is done. The blood comes into

contact with the guilty conscience, and it is all over with sin. As if it were but a handful that moves a mountain of sin, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing; he counteth great oceans of our sin as though they were but a drop of a bucket. Believing in Christ in a moment, by the divine and majestic process which God has ordained, we get the perfect cleansing of sin.

**7.** In the last place, just a hint upon the WISDOM of the text. What a wise way of cleansing from sin the text speaks of! Beloved, suppose God had devised a plan for pardoning sin which did not turn the sinner's face to God; then you would have a very singular spectacle; you would have a sinner pardoned by a process which enabled him to do without his God; and it strikes me he would be worse than he was before. But here, before ever the sinner can receive pardon he must say, "I will arise and go unto my Father;" and he must come closer into contact with God than he ever came before. He must see God in the flesh of Christ, and must look to him if he would be saved. I do bless God that I have not to turn my face to hell to get pardon, but I have to turn my face towards heaven; that seems to me to be the wise way, for while it takes away the sin, which was like a disease, it takes away the distance from God, which was the true root of that disease; it turns the sinner's face in the direction of holiness and bliss.

Observe the benefit of this plan of salvation in the fact that it makes the sinner feel the evil of sin. If we were pardoned in a way which did not involve pain to some one, we should say, "Oh, it is easy for God to forgive it;" but when I see the streaming veins of Jesus, and mark the sweat of blood fall to the ground, and hear him cry, "They have pierced my hands and my feet," then I understand that sin is a dreadful evil. If a man should be pardoned without being made to feel that sin is bitter, I do not know that he would be really any the better off- perhaps better unpardoned than pardoned, unless he was led to hate sin.

Our gracious God has also chosen this plan of salvation with the wise design of making man glorify God. I cannot see sin pardoned by the substitutionary atonement of the Lord Jesus, without dedicating myself to the praise and glory of the great God of redeeming love. it would be a pity if man could be pardoned, and afterwards could live a selfish, thankless life, would it not? If God had devised a scheme by which sin could be pardoned, and yet the sinner live to himself, I do not know that the world or the man would be advantaged. But here are many birds killed with one

stone, as the proverb puts it. Now henceforth at the foot of the cross, the bands which bound our soul to earth are loosened. We are strangers in the land, and henceforth “God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto us, and we are crucified to the world.”

I leave this text with the believer, only adding, if any of you would have it, and joy in it, you must walk in the light. I pray God the Holy Ghost to bring you to see the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ; then will you trust him, and then shall you have fellowship with him, and by his blood you shall be cleansed from all sin. God bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON. - 1 John 1, 2:1-11.***

# EARLY AND LATE, OR HORAE GRATIAE

NO. 664

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 10TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. . . . And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place. . . . Again he went out, about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?” —

Matthew 20:1, 3, 5, 6.

WE have frequently observed that we do not think it right to neglect the connection of Scripture. We have no right to tear passages of Scripture from their context and make them to mean what they were not intended to teach; and therefore I have in the reading given you, according to my ability, what I think to be the immediate design of the present parable. It is a rebuke to those who fall into a legal spirit and begin calculating as to what their reward ought to be in a kingdom where the legal spirit is entirely out of place, since its reward is not of debt but of grace. I think I may now, without any violation of propriety, dwell upon one very distinct fact in connection with the parable. It is not right to violate the drift of the parable, but having already observed it and made it as clear as we can, we believe that we are now authorized to make use of one of the main circumstances mentioned in it.

This morning I intend to call your attention to the fact that the laborers were hired at different periods of the day, by which doubtless we are

taught, that God sends his servants into his vineyard at different times and seasons; that some are called in early youth, and others are not led to enter into the service of the Master until declining years have brought them almost to the eventide of life.

I must, however, ask you to remember that they were all called: by the mention of which the Savior would teach us that no man comes into the kingdom of heaven of himself. Without exception, every laborer for Jesus has been called in one sense or another, and he would not have come without being so called. They are all called. Were a man what he should be he would need no pressing and invitation to come to the gospel of Christ; but since human nature is perverted, and men put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness, man needs to be called by the outward word; he needs to be invited, persuaded, and entreated; he needs, to use the strong expression of the apostle Paul, that as though God did beseech him by us we should pray him in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. Nay, further than this, although some men come to work in a legal spirit in the vineyard through this common call of the gospel, yet no man in spirit and in troth comes to Christ without a further call, namely, the effectual call of God's Holy Spirit. The general call is given by the minister, it is all that he can give. If the preacher attempts to give the particular call as some of my hyper-calvinistic brethren do, confining the gospel command to a certain character and trying to be themselves the discoverers of God's elect, and to make that particular which is always universal; if the preacher acts thus, and virtually endeavors to give the particular call, he makes a sorry mess of it, and usually fails altogether to preach the gospel of glad tidings to the sons of men. But when man is content to do what he can do, namely, preach the commandment "that we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and that "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent," then there comes with the general call to the chosen of God a particular and special call which none hut the Holy Ghost can give, but which he gives so effectually that all who hear it become willing in the day of God's power, and turn with full purpose of heart unto the Lord. In what sense is it true that many are called but few chosen, if none are to be called by the preaching of the Word but those who are chosen? There are two callings, the one is general to all who hear of Jesus, and many who are thus called are not chosen; the other is personal and peculiar to the elect, "for whom he did predestinate them he also called." To return to our point; all in the vineyard are in some sense

called. There is not a solitary exception to this rule in the entire Christian Church. The doctrine of free-will has not a single specimen to show to prove itself. There is not a sheep in all the flock that came back to the shepherd unsought; there is not a single piece of money which leaped again into the woman's purse, she swept the house to find it: nay, I will go further, and say there is not even a single prodigal son in the entire family who did ever say, "I will arise, and go unto my Father," till first the Father's grace, veiling itself in the afflicting providence of a mighty famine, had taught the prodigal the miserable results of sin, as he fed the swine, and fain would have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did cat, but could not do so.

I want you to notice another fact before I come to the subject now in hand, and that is, that all those who are called are said to have been hired. Of course in a parable no word is to be construed harshly; we are to give the meaning according to the drift; but still I think we may say that there is this likeness between hiring a servant and the engagement of a soul to Christ, that henceforth a man hired has no right to serve another, he serves the master who has hired him. When a soul is called by grace into the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, he cries, "O Lord, other lords have had dominion over me, but now thee only will I serve." He plucks off the yoke of sin, its pleasure, its custom, and he puts upon him that yoke of which the Master says it is easy, and he bears that burden which Jesus tells us is light. A hired servant must not work for another, he works for his master; and so a man who is called by grace lives not for any sinister object or motive, but to his Master only. A hired servant, again, does not work on his own account, he is not his own master; and "ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." Henceforth, though he calls no man "Master" on earth, yet he remembers that one is his Master in heaven, to whom all his service is due. There is a compact between the hired man and his master, and there is a solemn compact of spirit between the true believer and his Lord. We have devoted ourselves to his service, we have given up all liberty of self-will, and henceforth our will is at the government of our Lord, and all our powers and passions are to be, we hope will be, through God's grace, obedient to him who has hired us into the vineyard. Now the word "hired" was used in order to bring in the idea of reward. It was used to suit Peter's view of the case; it was used in order that his legal question of "What shall we have therefore?" might be clearly brought out, and its folly shown in the light of that sovereign grace which does as it wills with his own. Yet for all

that believers are hired in an evangelical sense, they do not serve God for nought, they shall not work without a reward. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." We shall have our reward for what we do for the Master, and though it be not wages in the sense of debt, yet verily I say unto you, there shall not be a single true-hearted worker for God who shall not receive of his Master most blessed wages of grace in the day when he comes to take account of his servants.

Now to the point, the master calls these hired servants of his at different hours of the day; and, in the second place, distinguishing grace shines forth in each case, and is illustrated and made more manifest in its varieties of glorious compassion and lovingkindness by the different hours at which the chosen ones are called.

**I.** ALL ARE NOT CALLED BY GRACE AT THE SAME TIME. Some, according to the parable, are called early in the morning. Thrice happy are these! The earliest period at which a child may be called by grace it would be difficult for us positively to define, because children are not all of the same age mentally when they are of the same age physically, and even in the matter of mental development we dare not limit the Holy One of Israel as to the chosen period of operation. As far as our observation goes, grace works upon some little ones at the very dawn of moral consciousness. There are, no doubt, precocious children, whose intellect and affections are very much developed, and very deeply sanctified even so early as two or three years of age. Such children usually are intended by the Master to be taken home at once. There are interesting biographies extant, which prove that holiness may bloom and ripen in the youngest heart, and many anecdotes are treasured up in such collections as "Janeway's Token for Children," of children whom I might call infants with strict propriety, out of whose mouth God ordained praise, and did, through them, still the enemy and the avenger. Little prattlers, whose tongues it would have been supposed could only have talked of toys, have been able to speak with an apparent profundity of knowledge of spiritual, and especially of heavenly things. It is certain that some have wrought their day's work for the Master in their mother's arms; they have spoken of the Savior in tones which have melted a mother's heart and gone to a father's conscience, and then they have been taken home. "Whom the gods love die young," said the heathen, and doubtless it is no small privilege to be so soon admitted into glory. Only shown on earth, and then snatched away to heaven, too precious to be left below. Precious child, how dear wert thou to the good God who sent thee

here and then took thee home! Fair rose bud! yet in the perfection of thy young beauty taken to be worn by the Savior on his bosom, how can we mourn thy translation to the skies?

*“No bitter tears for thee be shed,  
Blossom of being seen and gone!  
With flowers alone we strew thy bed,  
O blest departed one!  
Whose all of life, a rosy ray,  
Blush’d into dawn and pass’d away.”*

“Early in the morning,” would also include those who have passed the first hour of the day, but who have not yet wasted the second opening hour. I mean those hopeful lads and girls who perhaps would rather I should call them youths;-those who have reached their teens, have overleaped infancy and childhood, and are growing up in the heyday and vigor of youth. Youngsters still more at home in the playground than in the work-field, fitter, as Satan tells them, to be sporting in the market-place than busy in the vineyard; such as these, to the praise of divine love, are often hired by the householder. It is worth while to warn some of our brethren who seem to be exceedingly dubious of boyish and girlish piety,-to warn them against indulging harsh and suspicious doubts. We have remarked, and I think those who have watched our membership carefully will have remarked it too, that among all the slips and falls which have caused us sorrow, we have had but little sorrow from those who were added to us as boys or girls. There are those preaching the gospel this day with acceptance and power whom these hands baptized into Jesus Christ very early in their boyhood, and there are among us honored servants of God who have served this Church well, who, while they were yet at school were joyful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. With our earliest gettings some of us got an understanding of the things of the kingdom; our Bible was our child’s primer, our spelling-book, the guide of our youth and the joy of our earliest years. We thank God that there are Timothys still among us, and those not few and far between; and young Samuels, who, being brought as infants to the Lord’s house, have from that day forth worn the linen ephod and served after their fashion as priests unto God, serving him with all their hearts. Happy those who are called early in the morning! they have peculiar reasons for blessing and praising God.



*“Grace is a plant, where’er it grows,  
Of pure and heavenly root;  
But fairest in the youngest shows,  
And yields the sweetest fruit.”*

Let us spend a minute in thinking of their happy case who are saved in boyhood. Early in the morning the dew still twinkles on the leaves, the maiden blush of dawn remains and reveals an opening beauty, which is lost to those who rise not to see the birth of day. There is a beauty about early piety which is indescribably charming, and unutterably lovely in freshness and radiance. We remark in childhood an artless simplicity, a child-like confidence, which is seen nowhere else. There may be less of knowing but there is more of loving; there may be less of reasoning, but there is more of simply believing upon the authority of revelation; there may be less of deep-rootedness, but there is certainly more of perfume, beauty, and emerald verdure. If I must choose that part of the Christian life in which there is the most joy, next to the land Beulah, which I must set first and foremost by reason of its lying so near to Canaan, I think I would prefer that tract of Christian experience which lieth toward the sun-rising, which is sown with orient pearls of love, and cheered with the delicious music of the birds of hope.

Early in the morning, when we have just risen from slumber, work is easy; our occupation in the vineyard is a cheerful exercise rather than a toil such as those find it who bear the burden and heat of the day. The young Christian is not oppressed with the cares and troubles of the world as others are; he has nothing else to do but to serve his God. He is free from the embarrassments which surround so many of us, and prevent our doing good when we would consecrate ourselves wholly to it. The lad has nought to think of but his Lord. There are his books and his lessons, but he can be fervent of spirit in the midst of them. There are the companions of his childhood, but in guilelessness and simplicity he may be of service to them and to God through them. Give me, I say, if I would have an auspicious time to work for Jesus, give me the blessed morning hours, when my heart is bounding lightest and joy’s pure sunbeams tremble on my path; when my glowing breast lacks no ardor, and my happy spirit wears no chain of care.

One would prefer early conversion because such persons have not learned to stand idle in the market-place. A fellow, you know, who has been for hours standing with his hands in his pocket, talking with drunken men and

so on, is not worth much at the eleventh hour, nay even by the middle of the day it has become so natural to him to prop the walls, that he is not likely to take to work very readily. Begin early with your souls, break in the colts while they are young, and they are likely to take well to the collar. There are no workers like those who commenced work while they were yet children. What a promise of a long day there is for young believers; the sun has just risen, and he has to travel to his zenith and to descend again. There is ample room and verge enough though none to spare. If God in his providence permit it so to happen, that youngster yonder has twelve hours' work before him- what may he not accomplish? For a grand and glorious life early piety if not essential, is certainly a very great advantage. To give those first days to Jesus will spare us many sad regrets, prevent us acquiring many evil habits, and enable us to achieve good success through the Holy Spirit's blessing. It is well to begin to fly while yet the wings are strong, for if we live long in sin the wing may be broken and then they will flap wearily through the rest of our days, even when grace shall call us. Let it be the desire of parents here to have their children converted as children! And oh! may God cast that desire into the hearts of some of you young people that are here this morning that before you reach one-and-twenty, before you are called men, you may be perfect men in Christ Jesus, that while you are yet children you may be children of God. May you as "newborn babes receive the sincere milk of the Word," and the Lord grant that you may "grow thereby." Happy, happy, happy souls, whom the Master thus by distinguishing grace brings "early in the morning!"

The householder went out again at the third hour. This may represent the period in which we have mounted above being children and youths and are entitled to be called men. Suppose we settle the first hour as extending over the earliest seven or eight years of age; then the second hour runs on from that to twenty-one or thereabouts; and then we have a good length of time between twenty and thirty and onwards to reckon as the third, and fourth, and fifth hours. There are some whom divine grace renews at the third hour. This is late! one-and-twenty is grievously late, when you consider how much of early joy is now impossible, how much of sinful habit has now been acquired, how many opportunities for usefulness are now gone past recall. A quarter of the day has flown away for ever when we reach the third hour. It is the best quarter of the day, too, that has gone past recall. The first meal of the day is over,-that blessed breaking of the fast with Christ is no more possible. A very precious meal is that, when the

Savior gives us the morning portion, the manna which melteth when the sun is up. Blessed is the child's feeding upon Jesus:

truly I remember when I was awakened like Elias from under the juniper tree, and fed on such dainty fare that to this day the flavour abideth with me. The man of one-and-twenty has lost that first meal, breakfast is all over; Christ will say to him as he will to some others, "Come and dine," and that is precious; but the daintiest meal is over, the first early enjoyment, the first early rapture can never be known.

I have no doubt there are many here who think that to be converted at one-and-twenty is very soon; but why one-and-twenty years given to Satan? Why a fourth of man's existence devoted to evil? Besides, it may not be fourth, it may be one half, nay, in how many cases it is the whole of life. The sun goes down ere it is yet noon, and the idler in the market-place has no hope of ever being a worker in the vineyard. Death who comes when God wills, and gives us no notice, may cut down the flower before it has fully opened. "In the morning it is like grass that groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withereth." It is late, it is sadly late! It is a sad thing to have lost those bright days in which the mind was least engaged, in which it was the most susceptible of forming godly habits. It is a sad thing to have learned so much of sin as one may have learned by one-and-twenty, a sad thing to have seen so much of iniquity, to have treasured up in one's memory so much of defilement. Twenty years with God; one might have been in such a time a good scholar in the kingdom; but twenty years in the world one begins to be like scarlet that has been lying in the dye till it is stained through and through. It is late, but we thank God that it is not too late. Nay, it is not too late even for the grandest of purposes. Not only is this period of life not too late for salvation, but it is not too late to do much for Jesus Christ. Some of us when we were one-and-twenty, had finished five years of Christian ministry, and had been the means of bringing many souls to the cross of Christ; but if others are led by grace to begin then, why there is a good period still remaining if God in providence spares our lives. The young man is now in all his strength and vigor, his bones are full of marrow, and his heart is full of fire. We ought to have acquired a good degree of education, and be prepared to acquire more.

Now he is just in the time when he should work. His plans of life are not settled as yet; he is not married yet, probably; as yet there are no children about him to have been injured by his ill example; he has an opportunity of

rearing up a household in the fear of God. He is commencing business, he has an opportunity of so conducting that business that there may never need to be a time when he shall have to tack about and steer another course. He may, if called by God's grace at one-and twenty, begin an honorable career, in which there need not be an angle or a curve, but straight to the harbour's mouth he may steer and mark upon the sea of life one shining furrow which shall reach in a direct line from the present moment straight to the lights of heaven, which he shall reach with his sail full and a priceless cargo on board to the praise of the glory of divine grace. It is late, it is very late in some respects, but oh! it is not too late to serve the Master well, and to win a crown of great reward, the gift of love divine.

There is abundance of work to do for us who are in this third, fourth, and fifth hour of the day. In fact, I suppose the Church must look to us for its most active work. After this period and the next, a man frequently becomes rather a recipient from the Church than a donor to it in the matter of activity. Its fresh blood, its energy, its warmth of heart, its ready action, must to a great extent come from the young men who are converted, Oh, you of one-and-twenty, I would to God that you were all born from heaven! You maidens, in your early beauty may the Master in his infinite mercy bring you in! Oh, could you know the sweetness of his love, you would not need persuading! Could you understand the joy of true religion, you would not want entreating! There is more hallowed mirth enjoyed in secret with the Lord Jesus Christ, than in all the merriment the world can yield. One ounce of Christ's love is better than a ton of the world's flatteries. The world offers bubbles with fair hues, bright to look upon, but vanishing at a breath; but Christ gives real treasure, enduring as eternity. The world's gold is all base money; it glitters, but it is not precious. There may be less glitter about the things of God, but there is a "solid joy and lasting pleasure," which "none but Zion's children know." May the Master come this morning to your hearts, and by my simple words may he call you at the third hour of the day into the vineyard.

The Master's grace was not exhausted, and therefore he went out at the sixth hour. We find him going into the market at high noon. Half the day was over. Who is going to employ a man, and give him a whole day's wages when twelve o'clock has come? He will not do too much if you hire him at six, what will he do if you engage him at twelve? Half a day's work! that is a poor thing to seek or to offer. The Master, however, seeks and

accepts it. He promises, "Whatsoever is right, I will give you;" and there are some found who at the sixth hour enter into the vineyard and, being saved by grace, begin their work for Jesus. This may represent the period of life in which man is supposed to be in his prime-when he is past forty and onward. This is sadly late, very sadly late. Sadly late in a great many respects, not only because there is so little time left, but because so very much of energy, and zeal, and force, which should have been given to God, has been wasted; and has to some extent been used to fight against God. Forty years of hardness of heart! That is a long time for divine patience. Forty years of sin! That is a long season for conscience to mourn over. "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation," said God. In the wilderness they hardened their hearts all that time; and he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. What a blessing for you of forty and unconverted, that he has not sworn so terrible an oath concerning you, that still his longsuffering lingers, still his patience bears with you, still does he say to you, "Go, work, my son-go work this day in my vineyard." It is sadly late, because it has become so more than natural to you to walk in the way of sin. You will have so much to contend with in future, as the result of the past. Putting the ship of the soul about is not such easy work as turning a vessel by her helm; only a divine hand can steer a soul upon the tack of grace. You will need much grace to conquer those corruptions which have had forty years to take root in. You have a tenant in your house who is in possession, and you will find that possession to be nine points of the law; it will be a hard ejectment for you to effect, so hard indeed, that only a "stronger than he" can cast him out. To your dying day the recollection of evil things which you heard during these forty years of unregeneracy will stick by you; you will hear the echoes of an old song just when you are trying to pray, and some deed which you regret and mourn over, will come to check you just when you are about to say, "Abba Father," with an unstammering tongue. It is late, it is very, very late, this sixth hour, but it is not too late. It is not too late for some of the richest enjoyments; you can yet dine with Jesus; he can yet manifest himself unto you, as he doth not unto the world; you can have yet much time to serve him in. It is not too late yet to be distinguished among his servants. Take John Newton's life; he was called in the middle of the day, but John Newton left his mark in God's vineyard, a mark that will never be forgotten. I suppose Paul Could not have been much less than of that age when he was called by sovereign grace; nay, the most of the apostles were probably very little short of this age when mercy met with them; still they

did a glorious day's work. If saved by grace in middle life, my brother, you must work harder, you must let the time past suffice you to have wrought the will of the flesh, and now you must redeem the time, because the days are evil. Why, a man converted at forty should go double quick march to heaven, there should not be a moment lost now. Work the engine at high pressure, and give two strokes for every one that might be given by younger men and younger minds. Seek in the divine strength to do twice as much in the time, since you have only half the time to do a life's work in. Crowns for Christ, I know you wish to win them; then he up and doing, beloved. You are saved by grace, and by grace alone. You pant to honor Christ, because of his free love to you; cannot you endeavor to honor him as much in the remnant which remains as others do in the whole length of their life? You may by zeal, and prudence, and discretion, and perfect consecration, yet serve the Master well.

The householder went out at the ninth hour, at three o'clock in the afternoon. Nobody thinks of engaging day-laborers at three o'clock in the afternoon. A day's work to be done from three till six! It shows you that this gospel hiring is nothing like a legal hiring; it must be all of grace, or a man would not think of doing such a thing. Well now, three o'clock in the afternoon, that is from sixty to seventy. The prime of life has gone. It is late, it is sadly late, very sadly late. It is late because all the powers of the man are weak now. His memory begins to fail; he thinks his judgment better than ever it was, but probably that is only his own opinion. Most of the faculties lose their edge in old age. He has acquired experience, but still there is no fool like an old fool; and a man who has not been taught by divine grace learns very little of any value in the school of providence. Sixty thousand years would not make a man wise if grace did not teach him. Now think of it, is it not late? Here is the man: if he be converted now, what is there left of him? He is just a candle end. He may give a little light, but it is almost like a snuff burning in the socket. All those sixty years, seventy years, have been spent, where? Cover it all up. Let us go backward as Noah's sons did, and cover it all up; and oh, may almighty grace cover it too! The fact is terribly appalling-sixty, seventy years spent in the service of Satan! Oh what good the man might have done! Had he but served his God as he served the world, what good he might have done! He has made a fortune, has he! How rich he might have been in faith by this time. He has built a house! Yes, but how he might have helped to build the Church, The man has been playing at card-houses; he has been like

boys by the sea-shore building castles of sand, which must all come down, and must come down very soon too, for I hear the surges of the dread tide of death, it is rolling in even now. Those teeth which have fallen out, those pains and rheumatics, and so on, all show that this is not his rest. The tabernacle is beginning to crumble about the man, and the warning is loud which reminds him that he must soon be gone, and leave his wealth and his house; and so if this be all, in the end it will turn out that he has done nothing; he has piled up shadows, heaped together thick clay, and that is all he has done; when he might, if he had believed in Jesus, have done so much for God and for the souls of men. What evil habits he has acquired! What can you ever make of this man? If he be saved, it will be so as by fire. He is called, and he shall enter heaven, but oh! how little can he do for the Master, and what strong corruptions will he have to wrestle with, and what an inward conflict even till he gets to heaven! It is late, it is very late, but oh! blessed be God! it is not too late. We have had within these walls persons who have long passed the prime of their days, who have come forward and said, "We will cast in our lot with you because the Lord is with you." We have heard their joyous story of how the old man has become a babe, amid how he that was hoary with years has been born again into the kingdom of Christ. It is not too late. Did the devil say so? The gate is shutting; I can hear it grating on the hinges, but it is not shut! The sun is going down, but he is not lost beneath the horizon yet; and if the Master calls thee, only run thou the faster because it is so; and when thou art saved, serve him with all thy might amid main, because thou hast so little time to glorify him here on earth, and short space in which to show thy sense of deep indebtedness to his surpassing love.

The day is nearly over, it has come to the eleventh hour, five o'clock! The men have been looking at their watches to see whether it will not soon be six; they are longing to hear the clock strike; they hope the day's work will soon close. See; the Master goes out into the marketplace among those hulking fellows who are still loitering there, and he pitches upon some and asks them, "Why stand ye here all the day idle? Go and work! and whatsoever is right I will give you." At the eleventh hour they come in-half-ashamed to come I will be bound,-hardly liking the others to see them; ashamed to begin work so late. Still they did steal in somewhere; and there were generous laborers who looked over the tops of the vines, and said to them, "Glad to see you, friends! glad to see you, however late." There were a few, I dare say, among the laborers, at least there are if this be the

vineyard, who would even stop their work and begin to sing and praise God to think that their fellows had been brought in at the eleventh hour. Now the eleventh hour must be looked upon as any period of life which is past threescore years and ten; how late it may extend I cannot tell. There is an authentic instance of a man converted to God at the age of a hundred and four, during the last Irish revival, who walked some distance to make a confession of his faith in Jesus Christ; and I recollect a case of one converted in America by a sermon which he had heard, I think, eightyone years previously. He was fifteen when he heard Mr. Flavell at the end of a discourse, instead of pronouncing the blessing, say, "I cannot bless you. How can I bless those who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ? 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha;' " and eighty-one years or more afterwards that solemn sentence came to the man's recollection when he was living in America, and God blessed it to his conversion. There have been some to whom the eleventh hour has been the very hour of death; some, I say, how many or how few is not for me to know. There is one instance we know in Scripture, it was the dying thief. There is but one; God however, in his abundant mercy can do as he wills to the praise of the glory of his grace, and at the eleventh hour he can call his chosen. It is very late, it is very very, very late, it is sorrowfully late, it is dolefully late, but it is not too late, and if the Master call thee, come-though an hundred years of sin should make thy feet heavy to thee, so that thy steps are painfully limping. If he call thee it is late but not too late, and therefore come, Have you ever thought of how the thief worked for his Lord? It was not a fine place for working, hanging on a cross dying, just at the eleventh hour; but he did a deal of work in the few minutes. Observe what he did. First he confessed Christ-he acknowledged him to be Lord, confessed him before men, In the second place he justified Christ-" This man has done nothing amiss." In the next place he worshipped the Lord Jesus, calling him "Lord." He even began to preach, for he rebuked his fellow sinner; he told him that he should not revile one who was so unrighteously condemned. He offered a petition which has become a very model of prayer-" Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." At any mate I wish I could say of myself what I can say of the thief, he did all he could; I cannot say that of myself, I am afraid I cannot say it of any of you. I do not know anytiming the thief could have due on the cross which he did not do. As soon as ever he was called, he seems to have worked in the vineyard to the utmost extent of his ability; and so let me say to you, if you should be called at the eleventh hour, my dear hearer,



though thou be well stricken in years amid aged, yet for Jesus Christ's sake out of great love for all the great things which he hath done for thee, go thy way and praise him with all thy might.

**II.** My time has gone, and I wanted to have shown that DISTINGUISHING GRACE SHONE RESPLENDENTLY IN EVERY INSTANCE. Those called in the early morning have delightful reason for admiring sovereign grace, for they are spared the ills and sins of life. I must content myself, however, by repeating concerning them the lines of Ralph Erskine.

*“In heavenly choirs a question rose,  
That stirred up strife will never close;  
What rank of all the ransomed race,  
Owes highest praise to sovereign grace.*

*Babes thither caught from womb and breast,  
Claimed right to sing above the rest;  
Because they found the happy shore,  
They never saw nor sought before.”*

What distinguishing grace is that which called us when we were young! Herein is electing love. “When Ephraim was a child then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” Some of us in time and in eternity will have to utter a special song of thankfulness to the love which took us in our days of folly and simplicity, and conducted us into the family of God. It was not because we were better disposed children than others, or because there was naturally anything good about us; we were wilful, heady, and high-minded, proud, wayward, and disobedient as other children are, and yet mercy separated us from the rest, and we shall never cease to adore its sovereignty.

Look at the grace which culls the man at the age of twenty, when the passions are hot, when there is strong temptation to plunge into the vices and the so-called pleasures of life. To be delivered from the charms of sin, when the world's cheek is ruddy, when it wears its best attire, and to be taught to prefer the reproach of Christ to all the riches of Egypt, this is mighty grace for which God shall have our sweetest song.

To be called of the Lord at forty, in the prime of life. This is a wonderful instance of divine power, for worldliness is hard to overcome, and worldliness is the sin of middle age. With a family about you, with much business, with the world eating into you as doth a canker, it is a wonder

that God should in his mercy have visited you then, and made you a regenerate soul. You are a miracle of grace, and you will have to feel it and to praise God for it in time and eternity.

Sixty again. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then ye who are accustomed to do evil may learn to do well." And yet you have learned, you have had a blessed schoolmaster who sweetly taught you, and you have learned to do well. Though your vessel had begun to rot in the waters of the Black Sea of sin, you have got a new owner, and you will run up a new flag, and you will sail round the Cape of Good Hope to the Islands of the Blessed, in the Laud of the Hereafter.

But what shall I say of you that are called when you are aged? Ah you will have to love much, for you have had much forgiven. I do not know that you may be in thankfulness a whit behind those of us who are called in our early youth; we have much to bless God for, and so have you. We are at one extreme and you are at the other; we would love much because we have been spared much sinning, and you must love much because you have been delivered from much sinning. Not to go through the fire is a theme for song; but to traverse the flame and not be burned, to walk the furnace and to be delivered from its vehement fire, oh! how should you find words with which to express your gratitude! Called early or called late, called at midday or called at early noon, let us together, since we have been called by grace alone, ascribe it all to the Lord Jesus, and moved by the mighty constraints of his love, let us work with body, soul, and spirit-work for him till we can work no longer, and then praise him in the rest of glory.

I pray you, brethren, suffer no idleness to creep over you. If you have sought to extend the Redeemer's kingdom, do it more. Give more, talk more of Christ, pray more, labor more! I often receive the kind advice, "Do less." I cannot do less. Do less! Why, better rot altogether than live the inglorious life of doing less than our utmost for God. We shall none of us, I am afraid, kill ourselves with working too hard for Jesus. It were such a blessed act of suicide that if there be a sin that is venial, it would certainly be that. I am not afraid that you are likely to perpetrate such an enormity. Work for the Master! Labour for the Master! We must spend and be spent, and wear ourselves out for him! Make no reserve for the flesh to fulfill the lusts of it! And oh, how happy shall we be, if we may be privileged to finish the work, and hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter

thou into the joy of thy Lord.” May the Lord bless you for Christ’s sake.  
Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-***  
***Matthew 19:27-20:29.***

# OPEN HOUSE FOR ALL COMERS.

NO. 665

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 17TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.”-Luke 15:2.*

IT is not very wonderful that the Pharisees could not understand the Savior's mode of action, not only because self-righteousness and bigotry had blinded their eyes, and callousness of heart to the interest of others had bound them up in the darkness of self-righteousness, but also because the Savior's mode of acting was contrary to the general current of the dispensation to which the Pharisee had been accustomed. The dispensation of the old covenant was that of distance. When God appeared even to his servant Moses, it was, “Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet;” and when he manifested himself upon Mount Sinai to his own chosen and separated people, one of the first commands was, “Thou shalt set bounds about the mount, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart.” In the sacred worship of the tabernacle and the temple the thought of distance must always have been prominent to the devout mind. The mass of the people did not even enter the outer court. Into the inner court none but the priests could ever dare to come; while into the innermost place, or the holy of holies, but once a year one person only ever entered. A thick costly veil hung before the manifestation of Jehovah's presence, and upon the Shekinah no mortal eye ever gazed, except that eye which once a year alone dared to look upon its splendor through the mist of the smoking incense, when the blood of atonement was sprinkled on the mercy seat. The Lord seemed ever to be saying to the whole of his people, with but a few exceptions, “Come not nigh hither.” It was the dispensation of distance; as if the Lord in those

early ages would teach man that sin was so utterly loathsome to him that he must treat men as lepers put without the camp, and when he came nearest to them yet made them feel the width of the separation between a holy God and the impure sinner. But Jesus Christ came on quite another footing. The word "Go" was now exchanged for "Come," and distance was made to give place to nearness; partitions were broken down, middle walls of separation became like tottering fences, and we who sometime were afar off were made nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ. Hence, Incarnate Deity has no wall of fire about it. Christ was surrounded with that divinity which doth hedge about a king, but it was only as a hedge of thorns to himself, and not as a hedge of briars to keep off the approach of the meanest of mankind. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"-that is the joyful proclamation of God as he appears in human flesh. Not now does he teach the leper his leprosy by setting him at a distance, but by suffering the penalty of man's defilement; not now does he teach man that the disease is naturally incurable; he now shows him the heavenly cure, by revealing the fact that God without sullying his purity can come into contact with impurity in order to its removal, and without receiving contagion from the arch-leper, the devil can grapple with him in the human heart, and lay hold upon his adversary that he may bind him hand and foot, and cast him away from men, no more to oppress our race. Jesus ushered in the dispensation of nearness, which, as you all know is to be followed by one of greater nearness still, for, whereas God is very near to us spiritually, the day draweth nigh-Oh, hasten it, good Lord!-when the angels shall sing, "The tabernacle of God is with men and he doth dwell among them;" when we shall need no temple in which Deity can be enshrined, for the Lord God and the Lamb shall be the temple of universal manhood, and we shall see him face to face, and days of distance and of mourning shall be ended. I do not wonder then that Pharisees, who had drunk very deep into the separating spirit of the law, should have been perfectly astounded that a person claiming to be the Messias, and professing to be that Adonai who sits at the right hand of Jehovah till his enemies are made his footstool,-should, as they thought, act so inconsistently with his own professions, and allow constantly a mob of the dross, and scum, and raff of the population to be associated with him. They therefore said, "This man receiveth sinners," and worse still, he breaks through all rules of caste, and all degrees of separateness, and makes himself so familiar that he actually eats with them.

Now, this truth, which so startled them, has become very familiar to those of us who have been received and have eaten with him; but still the sinner trembling under a sense of sin feels the spirit of the old law like a black cloud hovering over him, and he can hardly venture to believe, much less to understand in all its richness of mercy, that Jesus still receives sinners. He fosters the notion that Jesus will look for some good thing in him, and demand at least some redeeming trait in character, some act of penitence, some holy resolution, something or other which may mitigate guilt, and conciliate regard; but the abstract truth that this man receiveth sinners as such, and eateth with them, needs to be proclaimed again, and again, and again, that the ears of unbelieving, mistrustful men may at last receive it, and that their hearts may feel its power. May God the Holy Spirit bless our attempt this morning, and his shall be the praise.

Now, first of all, Jesus receiving sinners; and secondly, Jesus eating with them.

## **I.** First, then, JESUS RECEIVING SINNERS.

This was and is a great fact—our Lord received, and still receiveth sinners. He permits them to form a part of his congregation, and even to draw near to hear him. A philosopher wrote over the door of his academy, “he that is not learned, let him not enter here;” but Jesus speaketh by Wisdom in the Proverbs, and says, “Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, let him eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.” (Proverbs 9:4, 5.) He bids the simple come and learn at his feet. Moral teachers have always been choice in the selection of their followers, and have thought it a degradation and a casting of pearls before swine, to throw their useful maxims, their invaluable dogmas as they dreamed them to be, before the vulgar herd, the sinful crowd. But this man receiveth sinners. Whatever other men may do, this man, this one, this one alone if no other with him, this one beyond all other teachers, however gentle and compassionate—this man receiveth sinners. He will speak and tell out his mysteries too, even when sinful ears are listening, for he receives sinners as his disciples, as well as his hearers. If they come casually into the throng, his eye glances upon them, and he has a word of gentle rebuke, and wooing love; but if they will come and join the class who cluster constantly about him, they shall be thoroughly welcome, and the deeper and higher truths reserved for disciples shall be revealed to them, and they shall know the mystery of the kingdom. When he has cleansed sinners, he receives

them not only as disciples, but as companions. This man permits the guilty, the once profane, the lately debauched, and formerly dissolute, to associate themselves with him, to wear his name, to sit in his house, to be written in the same Book of Life with himself. He makes them here partakers with him in his affliction, and hereafter they shall be partakers with him in his glory. This man receiveth pardoned sinners into companionship. Nay, more, he receives them into friendship. The head that leaned upon his bosom was a sinner's head, and those who sat at the table with him, to whom he said, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends," were all of them sinners, as they felt themselves to be. She who bore him, she who ministered to him of her substance, she who washed his feet with tears, she who was first at his empty sepulcher, all these were sinners, and some of them sinners emphatically. Into his heart's love he receives sinners, takes them from the dunghill and wears them as jewels in his crown, plucks them as brands from the burning, and preserves them as precious monuments of his mercy; and none are so precious in his sight as the sinners for whom he died. When Jesus receives sinners, he has not some out-of-doors reception place where he charitably entertains them for a time, as great men may do passing beggars, but he opens the big golden gates of his own heart, and he takes the sinner right into himself-yea, he admits the sinner into personal union with himself, and makes the sinner a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. There was never such a reception as this. This fact is still the same: he is still receiving sinners.

This fact must not excite your unbelief because of its strangeness. I know the world, sinful as it is, does not receive sinners. When her character is gone, the fallen woman is pointed at in the streets, and no decent society will entertain her; but this man receiveth harlots when their good name and fame has long since become a thing of the past. When the man has played the rogue, and the prison has confined him, among his fellows there are few who will speak with or own him; but this man receiveth thieves, for a dying thief went with him into Paradise. Some men who did run well for a season, who suddenly fall from their high estate, are banished and excluded, proscribed and shut out; and I suppose, while society is what it is, this must always be the case: nay, in Christ's Church discipline requires that the offender should be put forth from us; it is painful, but it must be done; but there is no "must" of this sort pressing with dire necessity upon the tender heart of the Savior; he can receive without pollution; ay, even receive into his heart without injury to his purity. "This man receiveth

sinners.” Contrary to the maxims, and customs, and ways of the world, Jesus keeps open house for outcasts; when all other doors are shut this man’s door is open; when every one else has bidden you go your way as an unclean thing, not fit to be looked upon, this man still stands crying, “Come unto me! Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” Blessed fact! May you prove its truthfulness, dear friends, by going to Jesus yourself, even though you be in the worst sense a sinner.

“This man receiveth sinners;” not, however, that they may remain sinners, but to pardon their sins, to justify their persons, to cleanse their hearts by the Holy Spirit, to preserve their souls by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, to lead them on from strength to strength, to enable them to serve him, and to show forth his praise, to have communion with him, and to enjoy his love—” This man receiveth sinners” at last to reign with him in glory everlasting, when the world and sin shall have passed away. Thus much we have noticed with regard to the fact. O blessed Spirit, give poor troubled consciences power to rest in this sweet truth.

I want your attention to another thought, namely, the consistency of this fact. It is a most consistent and proper thing that this man should receive sinners. If the Pharisees had not been so stultified by the prejudice, and would have considered the matter a little while, they might have thought so too. Consider his person—who was this man? He claimed to be, and even they themselves must have acknowledged him to have been by descent, the Son of David. It was most natural that the Son of David should receive sinners. It is what David did; you expect to see the Son of David doing what his father did before him. Do you not remember when David gat him to the hold, in the cave of Adullam, that it is written, “every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain unto them.” The very first band of men that ever served under David were most disreputable characters in the eye of Saul and his government. They had escaped from their country partly impoverished through the tyrannical conduct of Saul, and probably also being knee-deep in treason against him, they escaped to put themselves under the leadership of that captain of banditti, called David. It seemed but natural that the Son of David should receive just such a company, when he began to establish his spiritual monarchy. The New Jerusalem is founded upon Christ Jesus, who is pure and perfect, but its first stones are hewn out of the quarries of sin. Our Lord Jesus like Solomon builds the temple of the Church, but the materials



come from among those Tyrian sinners who are strangers and aliens by birth. The Savior takes, as his father, David, did before him, discontented bankrupts and distressed traitors that they may make up his band. If they had thought of that circumstance, they might have seen that it was not quite so strange that the Son of David receiveth sinners.

If you and I reflect awhile, we shall remember that the types which were set forth concerning Christ all seem to teach us that he must receive sinners. One of the earliest types of the Savior was Noah's ark, by which a certain company not only of men but also of the lowest animals were preserved from perishing by water, and were floated out of the old world into the new. See, going up the hill on which the ark is built, not only the fleet gazelle, the timid sheep, the patient ox, the noble horse, the generous dog, and the fair creatures that you would wish to spare; but here comes the lion, his jaws all stained with blood; here is the fierce tiger and the wild hyena, the filthy swine and the stupid ass; creatures of all kinds come hither and find shelter. Who complains? I hear no voice lifting up its veto and crying, "There is no room for the swine here; there is no room for the fierce tiger here." The ark was ordained on purpose to save some of every kind; and just so, our Savior Jesus receives all sorts of people into himself, and it is no marvel if this man receiveth sinners. Hither fly, ye loving and tender doves! Hither come, ye sweet birds of purest song! But ho, ye ravens, eagles, vultures, and birds of evil name, haste ye hither also, for the ark receives all who come! A very prominent type under the Levitical dispensation was the City of Refuge. If a man had slain another, he fled from the pursuer of blood with hot haste and swift foot, and ran at once into the City of Refuge, and the gates were shut and he was preserved. Now, brethren, you would not have thought it a strange thing if you had seen a man-slayer flying to the city, you would have thought it far more singular if any came there but man-slayers. "Why," say you, "this city has been set up and ordained on purpose that men who have been men-slayers might find refuge within its walls, and therefore it is natural to find the red-handed man come flying here." Beloved, Jesus Christ is the City of Refuge; who should fly to him but the sinner wanting refuge, and whom should he shelter but those requiring sanctuary from the avenger of blood? When you see the guilty hastening to Jesus, you say, "It is in keeping with the type, and it is no marvel whatsoever that he receives them." The scape-goat, again, was a very manifest type of the Messiah. They laid the sins of the people upon the scape-goat's head, and then it took all their iniquities away

into the wilderness. Now, suppose some objecting critic had said, "This goat which is set apart in the worship of God actually bears sins upon its head, and here are sinful people coming to put their sins there." Who else should come? What was the meaning of the scape-goat, if there were no sin among the people of Israel? Come here this day, not ye righteous, for ye want no scape-goat, but ye sinful ones. Here is the sin-hearer in type before you, set apart to bear the iniquity of the people, he is about to be driven into the wilderness to take sin away; come ye hither and put your sin upon him, for unless ye come the ceremony will have no meaning whatever. Look through any of the types, and with very few exceptions, the thought of sin is prominent, and the doctrine that Christ is to come into the world to save sinners is clearly written upon the fore-front of the whole set of types of the Old Testament.

Let us remark again that the metaphors which Christ has used to set forth himself, many, if not all of them imply that he receives sinners. What is written concerning him? "There shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." In our hymns over and over and over again we delight to sing,

*"There is a fountain filled with blood."*

and yet again,

*"The fountain of Christ, Lord help us to sing."*

Now what is the fountain for but for the cleansing of the filthy. Cleanse the already clean! Absurd! Why need they it? If they be already pure, why need they wash? But the fact that there is provision made for great washing implies great filthiness, and that the fountain is furnished with a purifying element of wondrous power, namely, precious blood, seems to indicate that it was meant for great sin, unheard-of sin-sin which to the uttermost has polluted and defiled the frame of manhood. The Savior also describes himself as a feast in many of his parables. A great king makes a supper, and oxen and fatlings are killed. Now for whom is a feast prepared but for the hungry? In the parables the feast is set not merely for hungry persons, but the blind, the halt, and the lame are called, and compelled to enter. The Savior would not have delighted to set himself forth as waters except for the sake of thirsty ones, or as meat, had there been no famishing souls. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," saith he, "come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, let him come buy wine and milk, without money and

without price." Why all this to persons who have no needs? Sinners are those who have these needs, these hungerings and thirstings; and they are bidden to come to Christ as the gospel feast.

Moreover, the Master has been pleased to take to himself one or two titles which imply that he came to receive sinners. He takes the title of physician, but as he told these very Pharisees a little while before, "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." There is no practice for the physician in a neighborhood where every man is well. There must be sickness to involve the necessity for a physician. Wherefore his art? Why his skill in pharmacy if men are safe and sound without it? And why Christ the Savior-the pardoner-if none to save or forgive? There is no supererogation in the Bible, nothing superfluous-why Christ a physician, unless for the sick? He styles himself very frequently the Redeemer, and saints in the olden times delighted to speak of him as their Redeemer; but for whom a Redeemer? Who wants redeeming but a slave? Who needs to be purchased into liberty but the man who is in hopeless bondage, and cannot free himself from the chain? A redeemer for men already free- how can it be? He sets free not free men, but captives; he looses real and irksome fetters; he snaps not fictitious chains which fancy binds about fretful, frivolous persons, but he breaks iron chains and snatches real yokes from off the necks of the thoroughly bound. There can be no Redeemer in the fullness of the title unless the persons are enslaved, and his office must relate to such. I think I may distinctly say that if all the titles of the Savior do not involve or suppose the existence of sins, the most do, and that either directly or indirectly, they would furnish an argument to me to show that this man came into the world to receive sinners.

If more evidence were wanted, I would point you to the Savior's mirades. The miracles which the Savior performed were very few of them miracles of judgment; they were almost all miracles of mercy. They were performed upon the sick, symbolical of his spiritual miracles upon the morally sick. They were performed upon persons possessed of devils, as if to show at once that even the devilish element which enters into man's rebellion is not too strong for the Savior to conquer, or too foul for him to touch. His miracles were sometimes wrought on the dead, and those, as you will remember, in different stages of corruption. The young child in Jairus' chamber was yet sweet of flesh as though she had just fallen asleep: he quickened her. The young man at the gates of Nain was taken out to be buried: already there were tokens which made the mother say, "Let us bury

our dead out of our sight.” But the Almighty voice quickened him. As for Lazarus, he had been dead four days already, and his sister said, “By this time he stinketh,” and as if to betoken that Jesus Christ can deliver not only from incipient sin, but from sin in its foulest stage of corruption and putridity, he spake to Lazarus and said, “Lazarus, come forth.” These miracles must have had some meaning and some teaching. If he thus touched men and healed their natural infirmities, how think ye, will not he, whose mission is mainly spiritual, heal spiritual infirmities? He might have said, and said truly, “Though I heal you, that is not the grand design of my mission: my kingdom is not of this world, nor are my healings intended to be of this world either in their grandest development: I descended from heaven to heal sick souls, to raise the spiritually dead, and conquer disease in the realm of spirit, rather than in the physical world.” This day every miracle of the Savior seems to cry to me, to you, “Diseased souls, look to Jesus Christ, and be ye saved.”

Did you ever observe how many of his parables, also, are to the same effect-how, time after time, as in the three memorable parables of the chapter before us, it is the sinner that he is teaching, and it is God’s love in forgiving sin that he is endeavoring to set forth before the eyes which self-righteousness has made, alas! so dim and blind. He is ever and anon telling us of a vainglorious Pharisee, whose prayer is a mass of reeking pride; and of a penitent Publican, whose humble cry brings justification from on high. He speaks of two debtors, who had nothing to pay, frankly were forgiven; and of the one who loved most, because he had most forgiven. He talks of a barren fig-tree, spared to be digged about and dunged; of a wounded man, pitied and succoured by a good Samaritan; of loiterers admitted to the vineyard at the eleventh hour; and of poor, and halt, and lame, entertained at a banquet of love.

I need not continue longer in this strain, for I think the consistency of the fact is evident to you all. I can well picture before me Jesus Christ receiving sinners, but I cannot imagine him, I cannot, with the utmost stretch of imagination, picture him as rejecting sinners. I cannot read the rest of his life, and then think of him as saying, “Stand back, ye unclean.” I cannot suppose him with a crowd before him crying, “Far hence, ye ungodly; keep a distance from this pure and sacred Being who condescends to look upon you,” and I cannot-I will not try either-I cannot fancy it possible that he will reject you, my dear friend, if you go this morning into his presence and humbly seek his face. It would be altogether a departure

from his constant mode of action, and there can be no such departure, for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Thus, I think, we have shown the consistency of the fact with the person and work of Christ.

Observe, the condescension of this fact. This man, who towers above all other men, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners- this man receiveth sinners. This man, who is none other than the eternal God, before whom angels veil their faces- this man receiveth sinners. It needs an angel's tongue to describe this mighty stoop of love. That any of us should be willing to seek after the lost seed of the house of Adam is nothing wonderful, they are of our own race; but that he, the offended God, against whom the transgression had been committed- that he should take upon himself the form of a servant and bear the sin of many, and should then as man be willing to receive the vilest of the vile, and blot out their transgressions and iniquities- this is marvellous. It is only rendered believable at all, by the fact, that God himself declares it, and that abundant witnesses testify to it. I do think that if for the first time any but God had told the angels of this, they could not have conceived it true; and I do not wonder that sometimes sinners under a sense of sin cry out, "It is too good to be true." It were, indeed, too good, if it were looked at from your side of the question, but viewed as coming from God, the infinite fountain of all bounty and mercy, it is believable, it is joyfully certain. It is the greatest wonder in heaven, or earth, or even in hell. There is no marvel like the truth that "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," that He who ever liveth bowed his head to die for sinners; and having made atonement for sin, now receives the very chief of sinners into his heart's love, and makes them his companions and his friends. Oh, will ye kick against such condescension as this? Will your hearts be like iron when you think of such favor as this manifested to sinful men? Sinners, when God stoops, will not you stoop? When from the highest heaven he seeks you, will not you seek him? When you thus see his love so infinitely revealed, are there no drawings of heart, are there no meltings of penitence towards the bleeding Savior? Surely cold drops of horror might stand even upon marble, or exude from granite, at the sound of Calvary's groans; and are there no tears in your eyes, no thoughts of melting, moving penitence, when you mark such mercy and compassion manifested towards you? Jesus condescends to receive sinners, and yet they stand out against him. Be astonished, O heavens! Be ashamed, O earth!

We do but touch that point, and now let us notice the certainty of this fact. That “this man receiveth sinners” is undeniable. Sometimes when the sinner comes, Jesus is standing on the door-step, and before he begins to knock, he is safe in the Savior’s arms, and finds himself forgiven before he has time to make a complete confession. At other times men have to knock, but the very first knock opens the door. Some of us who stood knocking four or five years, unbelievably knocking, but still knocking anxiously, craving mercy and not finding it. Ah, but we did find it after all. It does not say that he will show you that he has received you in the next minute or two, that he will pour peace into your spirit the first moment he receives you, but he will receive you. If he tarry, wait for him; knock, and knock, and knock again, for there never yet was a soul that could say, “I was a sinner:

I went to this man and he did not receive me.” Thou art growing weary, art thou, young man; these three or four months that thou hast been watching and praying have tried thy patience. Ah, dear brother, seest thou not the cross, and the Savior hanging on it? If thou lookest to him, thy time of suspense will doubtless be over at once. Thou hast made a mistake: darkness has been over thine eyes; thou hast been looking to the wrong place—to thy feelings, thy penitence, thy faith, rather than to him; or, if it be true that he has kept thee waiting, yet wait on, hope on, hope ever. While the lamp holds out to burn, despair must not trample down thy soul. Jesus must receive thee:

he did receive sinners once, and again I bid thee recollect that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He must receive thee: cast thyself on him, and thou shalt find that he will receive thee. There is a great multitude of people here this morning, and yet amongst us all there is not one who can say, “We sought the Lord and he would not receive us;” but there are many hundreds here, who, though they had a sorry time of it in the season of conviction, yet can clap their hands and say, Truly, truly, the Master does manifest himself unto all who cry unto him in truth. Do thou try him, then, and thou shalt find it true with thee.

I shall want you now, dear friends, for a moment to permit me to show the adaptation of this fact to many who are now present. “This man receiveth sinners,” is an announcement well adapted to many of this congregation. It is so very plain. If it were a sentence which needed much explanation, it might not suit the multitude. There would be some who would spell it over

and say, "Alas! such a text hardly meets my case; it is a mystery; I cannot get at the bottom of it." But this is so simple, "This man receiveth sinners." You know what it is to be received into a house. You go, you knock, the door opens, you are received. This is all you have to do in the matter of salvation. You go, as you are, to Christ; you knock, you are received. It is a blessed sentence from its plainness.

It is very blessed, too, from its personality. I can see my name in it. You will say, "How?" Well, dear friends, I wish you may be able to see yours. "This man receiveth sinners." It does not say he receives John, Hannah, Sarah, Mary, and Thomas; it says much better than that; it says, "This man receiveth sinners." Now there may be a mistake about my name being Charles; and if I found it written in God's Word that he received a person of my name, I should always be excessively anxious about the registration; I should be afraid lest I should not really be the person described; but when it says he "receiveth sinners," I am very clear about this meaning me, for I know I am a sinner; the devil himself, liar as he is, dares not say I am not. Nay, he oftentimes does me very good service, by telling me how very clearly that is my name; and I never thank him for anything but that-that he does sometimes help one to read his title clear, by enabling one to see distinctly that he is a sinner. Well, you are a sinner: then the text means you; "This man receiveth sinners." If you were in some country, say in the center of Africa, wandering about at night, amidst a crowd of huts, wondering where you could find lodging for the night; if you saw a board put up very legibly printed with these words, "This person receives white men," why you would say to yourself, "That is it." You would not care though it did not say, "This person receives John Smith or Tom Brown." It would be quite enough for you, "He receives white men." You are a white man, and you would say, "He receives me." Now, this man receiveth sinners, you are a sinner: then he will receive you. Suppose we reverse it, and there were put up a notice in one of our streets, "At this house they receive black men." Now, I cannot conceive any black man saying, "They will not receive me because I am so very black. 'Why,' says he, 'It says they will receive me, and the more black I am the more certainly is this invitation meant for me. If I am a jet-black man, then I am very black, and they will with the less hesitation receive me.'" I cannot suppose a half-caste man saying, "Well, I have a little white in me, therefore I feel sure they will take me." He might feel proud of it, but then there would come afterwards the thought, "Then I am not so clear that this is meant for me, if I am not

all black." So if there be any of you who are a little self-righteous, and say, "I do not know whether I am such a sinner as some people are," you may doubt whether you are a sinner, but you who know you are sinners right through to the back-bone, sinners everywhere and every way, there cannot be any doubt about you, your name is as clearly there as possible. There is plainness and there is personality. But there is presentness too. "This man receiveth sinners." Sometimes on the door-steps of workhouses you may see a very sorry sight late at night-a company of men, women, and boys crowding on the door-step to spend the night there, because they came too late. There must be an hour when the workhouse must be shut, and the refuge for the night closed, and they arrived too late, and outside they must be kept. But you never saw a soul shivering outside Christ's door on the door-step of eternal ruin, because it came too late in this life. There was the thief: he had a hard run for it, but he just reached the door in time. Without doubt it is written on the top of my Master's door, "This man receiveth-at all times and at all seasons-this man receiveth sinners." It will be a dolorous day for you, some of you, if you die as you now are, when this sentence will be blotted out, and you will see written over the door of mercy, "This man received sinners." Then it will be the hell of your hells that he did receive sinners once, but that you never came; that when it was said "he receiveth sinners," you passed by carelessly and proudly, and would not enter; and now mercy is a thing of the past, and you are shut up where hope can never come, in the flames of hell. But as long as life lasts, dear hearers, that inscription stands in all its glorious presentness, "This man receiveth sinners."

Do observe the unqualified sense in which the sentence is put, "This man receiveth sinners." But how? What sort of sinners? How are they to feel? How are they to come? Not a word is said about their coming, or their preparation, but simply "This man receiveth sinners." Some sinners came to Christ walking; others came to Christ limping on crutches, having lost a leg: he never turned any away because they came on crutches. One man came on his bed-indeed, he did not come, but was brought by other people; Jesus received him all the same for that. There were some who did not seek the Lord at all, but Christ Jesus came to them, and received them by a blessed victory of grace. He receiveth sinners, and the only stipulation that is put in at all is, "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." If thou wilt, take. If thou hast a will to Christ, if God has given thee a will towards Christ Jesus-if thou hast nothing beyond that will, no feelings, no



emotions, no works, no experience which could qualify thee for him- if thou dost but will-” Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” “ This man receiveth sinners.” Sometimes if you want to get a child into an Orphan Asylum, you might just as well keep the child yourself as go through the expense and trouble of working to get the child in: there are so many difficulties to be encountered in effecting your design. If you want to get to Jesus Christ, there is no trouble, no expense. Going to Jesus Christ is coming to an open door of mercy. The city of the new Jerusalem, you remember, had four gates, and we are told none of them are ever shut, “they are not shut at all by day, and there is no night there;” so that come as we may, “This man receiveth sinners just as they come to him.”

**II.** Now, I wanted to have spoken upon the second head, but I have not had sufficient forethought to store up the time, so we must only say of that just this: that Jesus Christ having once received sinners, enters into the most familiar and endearing intercourse with them that is possible. HE FEASTS WITH THEM-their joys are his joys, their work for God is his work for God. He feasts with them at their table, and they with him at his table; and he does this wherever the table is spread. It may be in a garret, or in a cellar; in a wilderness, or on a mountain; he still eateth with them. This he does now in the ordinances and means of grace by his Spirit; and this he will do in the fullness of glory, when he takes these sinners up to dwell with him. Sinners are not merely permitted the parings of mercy, but the very marrow and fatness of mercy. They are not allowed to sit and dip their feet in the margin of the stream, but they may wade in and find it a river to swim in: they shall not in heaven sit in the outer circle, but they shall draw near the throne and reign with Jesus. There is nothing which Christ will not give to sinners. They shall be crowned; they shall have harps of gold; they shall dwell in the many mansions near to God himself. There is no second and lower party as it were: he does not receive sinners and put them at the lower end of the table, below the salt. He receives sinners, and eateth with them; receives them into the soul and flower of Christian life and Christian privilege among all the favored saints of the celestial courts.

I would God I had time to plead this matter home with some who are here this morning, and who are not believers in Jesus. Oh, sinner, trust my Master and thou shalt be saved. May the Spirit of God make thee trust him now! I know your sense of unworthiness; I know you feel you are not fit to come, but he says nothing about fitness, and why should you say it? Christ lays down no conditions, and why do you make conditions? “This man

receiveth sinners.” Why, says Bunyan, “I felt myself such a sinner once that I could not but fly to Christ, and if he had had a drawn sword in his hand, the terrors of hell were so dreadful that I could have borne the terrors of that drawn sword to escape from the wrath of God.” But here, instead of the drawn sword is the warm loving heart. Fly to it, sinner. God help thee to fly now, that thou mayest be saved. If he should reject thee come and tell us. I would not knowingly preach a lying gospel: and if you can prove to me that he does not receive sinners, we will have a Sunday service and preach that the gospel has failed; for we will preach the truth of him, and not speak falsely for God. When you find he rejects a coming sinner, let us hear it, that our hopes may no longer be as bright and high as they are now, if we are to be deceived after all. Try the Lord Jesus! sinner. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Come to Jesus now! Come as ye are! Come now to him! Ye need not stop to get to your houses to bend your knees to pray; one cry, one tear, one look with the believing eye will do it. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.” While we thus preach, may the Master enter into your hearts by his Spirit, and may you be led to him, and we will praise him together, world without end. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-Luke 15.***

# HOLY WORK FOR CHRISTMAS.

NO. 666

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24TH, 1863,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that They had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.” — Luke 2:17-20.

EVERY season has its own proper fruit: apples for autumn, holly berries for Christmas. The earth brings forth according to the period of the year, and with man there is a time for every purpose under heaven. At this season, the world is engaged in congratulating itself and in expressing its complimentary wishes for the good of its citizens; let me suggest extra and more solid work for Christians. As we think to-day of the birth of the Savior, let us aspire after a fresh birth of the Savior in our hearts; that as he is already “formed in us the hope of glory,” we may be “renewed in the spirit of our minds;” that we may go again to the Bethlehem of our spiritual nativity and do our first works, enjoy our first loves, and feast with Jesus as we did in the holy, happy, heavenly days of our espousals. Let us go to Jesus with something of that youthful freshness and excessive delight which was so manifest in us when we looked to him at the first; let him be crowned anew by us, for he is still adorned with the dew of his youth, and remains “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” The citizens of Durham, though they dwell not far from the Scotch border, and consequently in the olden times were frequently liable to be attacked, were exempted from the toils of war because there was a cathedral within their walls, and they were set aside to the bishop’s service, being called in the

olden times by the name of “holy work-folk.” Now, we citizens of the New Jerusalem, having the Lord Jesus in our midst, may well excuse ourselves from the ordinary ways of celebrating this season; and considering ourselves to be “holy work-folk,” we may keep it after a different sort from other men, in holy contemplation and in blessed service of that gracious God whose unspeakable gift the new-born King is to us.

I selected this text this morning because it seemed to indicate to me four ways of serving God, four methods of executing holy work and exercising Christian thought. Each of the verses sets before us a different way of sacred service. Some, it appears, published abroad the news, told to others what they had seen and heard; some wondered with a holy marvelling and astonishment; one, at least, according to the third of the verses, pondered, meditated, thought upon these things; and others, in the fourth place, glorified God and gave him praise. I know not which of these four did God best service, but I think if we could combine all these mental emotions and outward exercises, we should be sure to praise God after a most godly and acceptable fashion.

**I.** To begin then, in the first place, we find that some celebrated the Savior’s birth by PUBLISHING ABROAD what they had heard and seen; and truly we may say of them that they had something to rehearse in men’s ears well worth the telling. That for which prophets and kings had waited long, had at last arrived and arrived to them. They had found out the answer to the perpetual riddle. They might have run through the streets with the ancient philosopher, crying, “Eureka! Eureka!” for their discovery was far superior to his. They had found out no solution to a mechanical problem or metaphysical dilemma, but their discovery was second to none ever made by men in real value, since it has been like the leaves of the tree of life to heal the nations, and a river of water of life to make glad the city of God. They had seen angels; they had heard them sing a song all strange and new. They had seen more than angels,-they had beheld the angel’s King, the Angel of the Covenant whom we delight in. They had heard the music of heaven, and when near that manger the ear of their faith had heard the music of earth’s hope, a mystic harmony which should ring all down the ages,-the grave sweet melody of hearts attuned to praise the Lord, and the glorious swell of the holy joy of God and man rejoicing in glad accord. They had seen God incarnate,-such a sight that he who gazeth on it must feel his tongue unloosed, unless indeed an unspeakable astonishment should make him dumb. Be silent when their eyes had seen such a vision!

Impossible! To the first person the y met outside that lowly stable door they began to tell their matchless tale, and they wearied not till nightfall, crying, "Come and worship! Come and worship Christ, the new-born King!" As for us, beloved, have we also not something to relate which demands utterance? If we talk of Jesus, who can blame us? This, indeed, might make the tongue of him that sleeps to move,-the mystery of God incarnate for our sake, bleeding and dying that we might neither bleed nor die, descending that we might ascend, and wrapped in swaddling bands that we might be unwrapped of the grave-clothes of corruption. Here is such a story, so profitable to all hearers that he who repeats it the most often does best, and he who speaks the least hath most reason to accuse himself for sinful silence.

They had something to tell, and that something had in it the inimitable blending which is the secret sign and royal mar/c of Divine authorship; a peerless marrying of sublimity and simplicity; angels singing!-singing to shepherds! Heaven bright with glory! bright at midnight! God! A Babe!! The Infinite! An Infant of a span long!! The Ancient of Days! Born of a woman!! What more simple than the inn, the manger, a carpenter, a carpenter's wife, a child? What more sublime than a "multitude of the heavenly host" waking the midnight with their joyous chorales, and God himself in human flesh made manifest. A child is but an ordinary sight; but what a marvel to see that Word which was "in the beginning with God, tabernacling among us that we might behold his glory-the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?" Brethren, we have a tale to tell, as simple as sublime. What simpler?-"Believe and live." What more sublime?- was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself!" A system of salvation so wonderful that angelic minds cannot but adore as they meditate upon it; and yet so simple that the children in the temple may fitly hymn its virtues as they sing. "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." What a splendid combining of the sublime and the simple have we in the great atonement offered by the incarnate Savior! Oh make known to all men this saving truth!

The shepherds need no excuse for making everywhere the announcement of the Savior's birth, for what they told they first received from heaven. Their news was not muttered in their ears by Sybilline oracles, not brought to light by philosophic search, not conceived in poetry nor found as treasure trove among the volumes of the ancient; but it was revealed to them by that notable gospel preacher who led the angelic host, and

testified, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." When heaven entrusts a man with a merciful revelation, he is bound to deliver the good tidings to others. What, keep that a secret whose utterance eternal mercy makes to charm the midnight air? To what purpose were angels sent, if the message were not to be spread abroad? According to the teaching of our own beloved Lord we must not be silent, for he bids us "What ye bear in secret that reveal ye in public; and what I tell you in the ear in closets, that proclaim ye upon the house-tops." Beloved, you have heard a voice from heaven-you twice-born men, begotten again unto a lively hope, you have heard the Spirit of God bearing witness of God's truth with you, and teaching you of heavenly things. You then must keep this Christmas by telling to your fellow-men what God's own holy Spirit has seen fit to reveal to you.

But though the shepherds told what they heard from heaven. remember that they spoke of what they had seen below. They had, by observation, made those truths most surely their own which had first been spoken to them by revelation. No man can speak of the things of God with any success until the doctrine which he finds in the book he finds also in his heart. We must bring down the mystery and make it plain, by knowing, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, its practical power on the heart and conscience. My brethren, the gospel which we preach is most surely revealed to us by the Lord; but, moreover, our hearts have tried and proved, have grasped, have felt, have realized its truth and power. If we have not been able to understand its heights and depths, yet we have felt its mystic power upon our heart and spirit. It has revealed sin to us better; it has revealed to us our pardon. It has killed the reigning power of sin, it has given us Christ to reign over us, the Holy Spirit to dwell within our bodies as in a temple. Now we must speak. I do not urge any of you to speak of Jesus who merely know the Word as you find it in the Bible, your teaching can have but little power; but I do speak earnestly to you who know its mighty influence upon the heart, who have not only heard of the babe but have seen him in the manger, taken him up in your own arms and received him as being born to you, a Savior to you, Christos, the anointed for you, Jesus the Savior from sin for you. Beloved, can you do otherwise than speak of the things which you have seen and heard. God has made you to taste and to handle of this good word of life, and you must not, you dare not hold your peace, but you must tell to friends and neighbors what you have felt within.

These were shepherds, unlettered men. I will warrant you they could not read in a book; there is no probability that they even knew a single letter. They were shepherds, but they preached right well; and, my brethren, whatever some may think, preaching is not to be confined to those learned gentlemen who have taken their degrees at Oxford or at Cambridge, or at any College or University, It is true that learning need not be an impediment to grace, and may be a fitting weapon in a gracious hand, but often the grace of God has glorified itself by the plain clear way in which unlettered men have understood the gospel and have proclaimed it. I would not mind asking the whole world to find a Master of Arts now living who has brought more souls to Christ Jesus than Richard Weaver. If the whole bench of bishops have done a tenth as much in the way of soul-winning as that one man, it is more than most of us give them credit for. Let us give to our God all the glory, but still let us not deny the fact that this sinner saved, with the brogue of the collier still about him, fresh from the coal pit, tells the story of the cross by God's grace in such a way that Right Reverend Fathers in God might humbly sit at his feet to learn the way to reach the heart and melt the stubborn soul. It is true an uneducated brother is not fitted for all work-he has his own sphere-but he is quite able to tell of what he has seen and heard, and so it strikes me is every man in a measure. If you have seen Jesus and heard his saving voice, if you have received truth as from the Lord, felt its tremendous power as coming from God to you, and if you have experienced its might upon your own spirit, why you can surely tell out what God has written within. If you cannot get beyond that into the deeper mysteries, into the more knotty points, well, well, there are some who can, and so you need not be uneasy; but you can at least reveal the first and foundation truths, and they are by far the most important. If you cannot speak in the pulpit, if as yet your cheek would mantle with a blush, and your tongue would refuse to do her office in the presence of many, there are your children, you are not ashamed to speak before them; there is the little cluster round the hearth on Christmas night, there is the little congregation in the workshop, there is a little audience somewhere to whom you might tell out of Jesu's love to lost ones. Do not get beyond what you know; do not plunge into what you have not experienced, for if you do you will be out of your depth, and then very soon you will be floundering and making confusion worse confounded. Go as far as you know; and since you do know yourself a sinner and Jesus a Savior, and a great one too, talk about those two matters, and good will come of it.

Beloved, each one in his own position, tell what you have heard and seen; publish that abroad among the sons of men.

But were they authorized? It is a great thing to be authorized!

Unauthorized ministers are most shameful intruders! Unordained men entering the pulpit, who are not in the apostolical succession-very horrible! Very horrible indeed! The Puseyite mind utterly fails to fathom the depth of horror which is contained in the idea of an unauthorized man preaching, and a man out of the apostolical succession daring to teach the way of salvation. To me this horror seems very like a schoolboy's fright at a hobgoblin which his fears had conjured up. I think if I saw a man slip through the ice into a cold grave, and I could rescue him from drowning, it would not be so very horrible to me to be the means of saving him, though I may not be employed by the Royal Humane Society. I imagine if I saw a fire, and heard a poor woman scream at an upper window, and likely to be burned alive, if I should wheel the fire-escape up to the window, and preserve her life, it would not be so very dreadful a matter though I might not belong to the regular Fire Brigade. If a company of brave volunteers should chase an enemy out of their own county, I do not know that it would be anything so shocking, although a whole army of mercenaries might be neglecting their work in obedience to some venerable military rubric which rendered them incapable of effective service. But mark you, the shepherds and others like them are in the apostolical succession, and they are authorized by divine ordinance, for every man who hears the gospel is authorized to tell it to others. Do you want authority? here it is in confirmation strong from Holy Writ: "Let him that heareth say, Come "- that is, let every man who truly hears the gospel bid others come to drink of the water of life. This is all the warrant you require for preaching the gospel according to your ability. It is not every man who has ability to preach the Word; and it is not every man that we should like to hear preach it in the great congregation, for if all were mouth, what a great vacuum the Church would be; yet every Christian in some method should deliver the glad tidings. Our wise God takes care that liberty of prophesying shall not run to riot, for he does not give efficient pastoral and ministerial gifts to very many; yet every man according to his gifts, let him minister. Every one of you though not in the pulpit, yet in the pew, in the workshop, somewhere, anywhere, everywhere, do make known the savor of the Lord Jesus. Be this your authority: "Let him that heareth say, Come." I never thought of asking any authority for crying " Fire," when I saw a house



burning; I never dreamed of seeking any authority for doing my best to rescue a poor perishing fellow-man, nor do I mean to seek it now! All the authority you want, any of you, is not the authority which can stream from prelates decorated with lawn sleeves, but the authority which comes direct from the great Head of the Church, who gives authority to every one of those who hear the gospel, to teach every man his fellow, saying, "Know the Lord."

Here, dear brethren, is one way for you to keep a right holy, and in some sense a right merry, Christmas. Imitate these humble men, of whom it is said, "When they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning the child."

**II.** We set before you, now, another mode of keeping Christmas, by HOLY WONDER, ADMIRATION, AND ADORATION. "And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds." We shall have little to say of those persons who merely wondered, and did nothing more. Many are set a wondering by the Gospel. They are content to hear it, pleased to hear it; if not in itself something new, yet there are new ways of putting it, and they are glad to be refreshed with the variety. The preacher's voice is unto them as the sound of one that giveth a goodly tune upon an instrument. They are glad to listen. They are not sceptics, they do not cavil, they raise no difficulties; they just say to themselves, "It is an excellent gospel, it is a wonderful plan of salvation. Here is most astonishing love, most extraordinary condescension." Sometimes they marvel that these things should be told them by shepherds; they can hardly understand how unlearned and ignorant men should speak of these things, and how such things should ever get into these shepherds' heads, where they can have learned them, how it is that they seem so earnest about them, what kind of operation they must have passed through to be able to speak as they do. But after holding up their hands and opening their mouths for about nine days, the wonder subsides, and they go their way and think no more about it. There are many of you who are set a wondering whenever you see a work of God in your district. You hear of somebody converted who was a very extraordinary sinner, and you say, "It is very wonderful!" There is a revival; you happen to be present at one of the meetings when the Spirit of God is working gloriously: you say, "Well, this is a singular thing! very astonishing!" Even the newspapers can afford a corner at times for very great and extraordinary works of God the Holy Spirit; but there all emotion ends; it is all wondering, and nothing more. Now, I trust it will not

be so with any of us; that we shall not think of the Savior and of the doctrines of the gospel which he came to preach simply with amazement and astonishment, for this will work us but little good. On the other hand, there is another mode of wondering which is akin to adoration, if it be not adoration. I think it would be very difficult to draw a line between holy wonder and real worship, for when the soul is overwhelmed with the majesty of God's glory, though it may not express itself in song, or even utter its voice with bowed head in humble prayer, yet it silently adores. I am inclined to think that the astonishment which sometimes seizes upon the human intellect at the remembrance of God's greatness and goodness is, perhaps, the purest form of adoration which ever rises from mortal men to the throne of the Most High. This kind of wonder I recommend to those of you who from the quietness and solitariness of your lives are scarcely able to imitate the shepherds in telling out the tale to others: you can at least fill up the circle of the worshippers before the throne by wondering at what God has done.

Let me suggest to you that holy wonder at what God has done should be very natural to you. That God should consider his fallen creature, man, and instead of sweeping him away with the besom of destruction should devise a wonderful scheme for his redemption, and that he should himself undertake to be man's Redeemer, and to pay his ransom price, is, indeed, marvellous! Probably it is most marvellous to you in its relation to yourself, that you should be redeemed by blood; that God should forsake the thrones and royalties above to suffer ignominiously below for you. If you know yourself you can never see any adequate motive or reason in your own flesh for such a deed as this. "Why such love to me?" you will say. If David sitting in his house could only say, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" what should you and I say? Had we been the most meritorious of individuals, and had unceasingly kept the Lord's commands, we could not have deserved such a priceless boon as incarnation; but sinners, offenders, who revolted and went from God, further and further, what shall we say of this incarnate God dying for us, but "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us." Let your soul lose itself in wonder, for wonder, dear friends, is in this way a very practical emotion. Holy wonder will lead you to grateful worship; being astonished at what God has done, you will pour out your soul with astonishment at the foot of the golden throne with the song, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might be

unto Him who sitteth on the throne and doeth these great things to me.” Filled with this wonder it will cause you a godly watchfulness; you will be afraid to sin against such love as this. Feeling the presence of the mighty God in the gift of his dear Son, you will put off your shoes from off your feet, because the place whereon you stand is holy ground. You will be moved at the same time to a glorious hope. If Jesus has given himself to you, if he has done this marvellous thing on your behalf, you will feel that heaven itself is not too great for your expectation, and that the rivers of pleasure at God’s right hand are not too sweet or too deep for you to drink thereof. Who can be astonished at anything when he has once been astonished at the manger and the cross? What is there wonderful left after one has seen the Savior? The nine wonders of the world! Why, you may put them all into a nutshell-machinery and modern art can excel them all; but this one wonder is not the wonder of earth only, but of heaven and earth, and even hell itself. It is not the wonder of the olden time, but the wonder of all time and the wonder of eternity. They who see human wonders a few times, at last cease to be astonished; the noblest pile that architect ever raised, at last fails to impress the onlooker; but not so this marvellous temple of incarnate Deity; the more we look the more we are astonished, the more we become accustomed to it, the more have we a sense of its surpassing splendor of love and grace. There is more of God, let us say, to be seen in the manger and the cross, than in the sparkling stars above, the rolling deep below, the towering mountain, the teeming valleys, the abodes of life, or the abyss of death. Let us then spend some choice hours of this festive season in holy wonder, such as will produce gratitude, worship, love, and confidence.

**III.** A third manner of holy work, namely, HER SACRED HEART PONDERING AND PRESERVING, you will find in the next verse.

One at least, and let us hope there were others, or at any rate let us ourselves be others—one kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. She wondered: she did more—she pondered. You will observe there was an exercise on the part of this blessed woman of the three great parts of her being; her memory—she kept all these things; her affections—she kept them in her heart; her intellect—she pondered them, considered them, weighed them, turned them over; so that memory, affection, and understanding, were all exercised about these things. We delight to see this in Mary, but we are not at all surprised when we recollect that she was in some sense the most concerned of all on earth, for it was of her that Jesus

Christ had been born. Those who come nearest to Jesus and enter the most closely into fellowship with him, will be sure to be the most engrossed with him. Certain persons are best esteemed at a distance, but not the Savior; when you shall have known him to the very full, then shall you love him with the love which passeth knowledge; you shall comprehend the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of his love; and when you shall do so, then your own love shall swell beyond all length and breadth, all height and depth. The birth most concerned Mary, and therefore she was the most impressed with it. Note the way in which her concern was shown; she was a woman, and the grace which shines best in the female is not boldness—that belongs to the masculine mind; but affectionate modesty is a feminine beauty, and hence we do not read so much of her telling abroad as pondering within. No doubt she had her circle, and her word to speak in it; but for the most part she, like another Mary, sat still in the house. She worked, but her work was most directly for him, her heart's joy and delight. Like other children, the holy child needed care, which only a mother's hand and heart could exercise; she was therefore engrossed with him. O blessed engrossment Sweet engagement! Count not that to be unacceptable service which occupies itself rather with Jesus than with his disciples or his wandering sheep. That woman who broke the alabaster box and poured the ointment upon our Jesus himself was blamed by Judas, and even the rest of the disciples thought that the poor had lost a benefit, but "she hath wrought a good work on me" was the Savior's answer. I desire to bring you to this thought, that if during this season you retiring quiet ones cannot speak to others, or have no desirable opportunity or suitable gift for that work, you may sit still with Jesus and honor him in peace. Mary took the Lord in her arms; oh that you may bear him in yours! She executed works for his person directly; do you imitate her. You can love him, bless him, praise him, study him, ponder him, comprehend his character, study the types that set him forth, and imitate his life; and in this way, though your worship will not blaze forth among the sons of men, and scarcely benefit them as some other forms of work, yet it will both benefit you and be acceptable to your Lord. Beloved, remember what you have heard of Christ, and what he has done for you; make your heart the golden cup to hold the rich recollections of his past loving-kindness; make it a pot of manna to preserve the heavenly bread whereon saints have fed in days gone by. Let your memory treasure up everything about Christ which you have either heard, or felt, or known, and then let your fond affections hold him fast evermore. Love him! Pour out that alabaster box of your heart,

and let all the precious ointment of your affection come streaming on his feet. If you cannot do it with joy do it sorrowfully, wash his feet with tears, wipe them with the hairs of your head; but do love him, love the blessed Son of God, your ever tender Friend. Let your intellect be exercised concerning the Lord Jesus. Turn over and over by meditation what you read. Do not be loiter men — do not stop at the surface; dive into the depths. Be not as the swallow which toucheth the brook with her wing, but as the fish which penetrates the lowest wave. Drink deep draughts of love; do not sip and away, but dwell at the well as Isaac did at the well Lahai-roi. Abide with your Lord: let him not be to you as a wayfaring man that tarrieth for a night, but constrain him, saying, “Abide with us, for the day is far spent.” hold him, and do not let him go. The word “ponder,” as you know, means to weigh. Make ready the scales of judgment. Oh, but where are the scales that can weigh the Lord Christ? “He taketh up the isles as a very little thing — who shall take him up? “He weigheth the mountains in scales.” In what scales shall we weigh him? Be it so, if your understanding cannot comprehend, let your affections apprehend; and if your spirit cannot compass the Lord Jesus in the arms of its understanding, let it embrace him in the arms of your affection. Oh, beloved, here is blessed Christmas work for you, if, like Mary, you lay up all these things in your heart and ponder upon them.

**IV.** The last piece of holy Christmas work is to come. “The shepherds returned,” we read in the twentieth verse, “GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.” Returned to what? Returned to business to look after the lambs and sheep again. Then if we desire to glorify God we need not give up our business.

Some people get the notion into their heads that the only way in which they can live for God is by becoming ministers, missionaries, or Bible women. Alas! how many of us would be shut out from any opportunity of magnifying the Most High if this were the case. The shepherds went back to the sheep-pens glorifying and praising God. Beloved, it is not office, it is earnestness; it is not position, it is grace which will enable us to glorify God. God is most surely glorified in that cobbler’s stall where the godly worker as he plies the awl sings of the Savior’s love, ay, glorified far more than in many a prebendal stall where official religiousness performs its scanty duties. The name of Jesus is glorified by yonder carter as he drives his horse and blesses his God, or speaks to his fellow laborer by the

roadside as much as by yonder divine who, throughout the country like Boanerges, is thundering out the gospel. God is glorified by our abiding in our vocation. Take care you do not fall out of the path of duty by leaving your calling, and take care you do not dishonor your profession while in it; think not much of yourselves, but do not think too little of your callings. There is no trade which is not sanctified by the gospel. If you turn to the Bible, you will find the most menial forms of labor have been in some way or other connected either with the most daring deeds of faith, or else with persons whose lives have been otherwise illustrious; keep to your calling, brother, keep to your calling! Whatever God has made thee, when he calls thee abide in that, unless thou art quite sure, mind that, unless thou art quite sure that he calls thee to something else. The shepherds glorified God though they went to their trade.

They glorified God though they were shepherds. As we remarked, they were not men of learning. So far from having an extensive library full of books, it is probable they could not read a word; yet they glorified God. This takes away all excuse for you good people who say, "I am no scholar; I never had any education, I never went even to a Sunday-school." Ah, but if your heart is right, you can glorify God. Never mind, Sarah, do not be cast down because you know so little; learn more if you can, but make good use of what you do know. Never mind, John; it is indeed a pity that you should have had to toil so early, as not to have acquired even the rudiments of knowledge; but do not think that you cannot glorify God. If you would praise God, live a holy life; you can do that by his grace, at any rate, without scholarship. If thou wouldst do good to others, be good thyself; and that is a way which is as open to the most illiterate as it is to the best taught. Be of good courage! Shepherds glorified God, and so may you. Remember there is one thing in which they had a preference over the wise men. The wise men wanted a star to lead them; the shepherds did not. The wise men went wrong even with a star, stumbled into Jerusalem; the shepherds went straight away to Bethlehem. Simple minds sometimes find a glorified Christ where learned heads, much puzzled with their lore, miss him. A good doctor used to say, "Lo, these simpletons have entered into the kingdom, while we learned men have been fumbling for the latch." It is often so; and so, ye simple minds, be ye comforted and glad.

The way in which these shepherds honored God is worth noticing. They did it by praising him. Let us think more of sacred song than we sometimes do. When the song is bursting in full chorus from the thousands in this

house, it is but a noise in the ear of some men; but inasmuch as many true hearts, touched with the love of Jesus, are keeping pace with their tongues, it is not a mere noise in God's esteem, there is a sweet music in it that makes glad his ear. What is the great ultimatum of all Christian effort? When I stood here the other morning preaching the gospel, my mind was fully exercised with the winning of souls, but I seemed while preaching to get beyond that. I thought, Well, that is not the chief end after all—the chief end is to glorify God, and even the saving of sinners is sought by the right-minded as the means to that end. Then it struck me all of a sudden, “If in psalm singing and hymn singing we do really glorify God, we are doing more than in the preaching; because we are not then in the means, we are close upon the great end itself.” If we praise God with heart and tongue we glorify him in the surest possible manner, we are really glorifying him then. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me,” saith the Lord. Sing then, my brethren! Sing not only when you are together but sing alone. Cheer your labor with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Make glad the family with sacred music. We sing too little, I am sure, yet the revival of religion has always been attended with the revival of Christian psalmody. Luther's translations of the psalms were of as much service as Luther's discussions and controversies; and the hymns of Charles Wesley, and Cennick and Toplady, and Newton, and Cowper, aided as much in the quickening of spiritual life in England as the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield. We want more singing. Sing more and murmur less, sing more and slander less, sing more and cavil less, sing more and mourn less. God grant us to-day, as these shepherds did, to glorify God by praising him.

I have not quite done with them. What was the subject of their praise? It appears that they praised God for what they had heard. If we think of it, there is good reason for blessing God every time we hear a gospel sermon. What would souls in hell give if they could hear the gospel once more, and be on terms in which salvation grace might come to them? What would dying men give whose tune is all but over if they could once more come to the house of God, and have another warning and another invitation? My brethren, what would you give sometimes when you are shut up by sickness and cannot meet with the great congregation, when your heart and your flesh cry out for the living God? Well, praise God for what you have heard. You have heard the faults of the preacher; let him mourn them. You have heard his Master's message. do you bless God for that? Scarcely will you ever hear a sermon which may not make you sing if you are in a right

mind. George Herbert says, "Praying is the end of preaching." So it is, but praising is its end too. Praise God that you hear there is a Savior! Praise God that you hear that the plain of salvation is very simple! Praise God that you have a Savior for your own soul! Praise God that you are pardoned, that you are saved! Praise him for what you have heard, but observe, they also praised God for what they had seen. Look at the twentieth verse—"heard and seen." There is the sweetest music-what we have experienced, what we have felt within, what we have made our own-the things that we have made touching the King. Mere hearing may make some music, but the soul of song must come from seeing with the eye of faith. And, dear friends, you who have seen with that God-giving eyesight, I pray you, let not your tongues be steeped in sinful silence, but loud to the praise of sovereign grace, wake up your glory and awake psaltery and harp. One point for which they praised God was the agreement between what they had heard and what they had seen. Observe the last sentence. "As it was told them." Have you not found the gospel to be in yourselves just what the Bible said it would be? Jesus said he would give you grace -have you not had it? He promised you rest-have you not received it? He said that you should have joy, and comfort, and life through believing in him-have you not had all these? Are not his ways ways of pleasantness, and his paths paths of peace? Surely you can say with the queen of Sheba, "The half has not been told me." I have found Christ more sweet than his servants could set him forth as being. I looked upon the likeness as they painted it, but it was a mere daub compared with himself-the King in his beauty. I have heard of the goodly land, but oh! it floweth with milk and honey more richly and sweetly than men were ever able to tell me when in their best trim for speech. Surely, what we have seen keeps pace with what we have heard. Let us then glorify and praise God for what he has done.

This word to those who are not yet converted, and I have done. I do not think you can begin at the seventeenth verse, but I wish you would begin at the eighteenth. You cannot begin at the seventeenth- you cannot tell to others what you have not felt; do not try it. Neither teach in the Sunday-school, nor attempt to preach if you are not converted. Unto the wicked God saith, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" But I would to God you would begin with the eighteenth verse — wondering! Wondering that you are spared-wondering that you are out of hell-wondering that still doth his good Spirit strive with the chief of sinners. Wonder that this morning the gospel should have a word for you after all your rejections of



it and sins against God. I should like you to begin there, because then I should have good hope that you would go on to the next verse and change the first letter, and so go from wondering to pondering. Oh sinner, I wish you would ponder the doctrines of the cross. Think of thy sin, God's wrath, judgment, hell, thy Savior's blood, God's love, forgiveness, acceptance, heaven — think on these things. Go from wondering to pondering. And then I would to God thou couldst go on to the next verse, from pondering to glorifying. Take Christ, look to him, trust him. Then sing "I am forgiven," and go thy way a believing sinner, and therefore a sinner saved, washed in the blood, and clean. Then go back after that to the seventeenth verse, and begin to tell to others.

But as for you Christians who are saved, I want you to begin this very afternoon at the seventeenth.

*"Then will I tell to sinners round  
What a dear Savior I have found:  
I'll point to thy redeeming blood,  
And say-' Behold the way to God!'"*

Then when the day is over get up to your chambers and wonder, admire and adore; spend half an hour also like Mary in pondering and treasuring up the day's work and the day's hearing in your hearts, and then close all with that which never must close-go on to-night, to-morrow, and all the days of your life, glorifying and praising God for all the things that you have seen and heard. May the Master bless you for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Luke 2:1-20.***

# LAST THINGS.

NO. 667

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 31ST, 1865,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“At the last.” — Proverbs 5:11.*

THE wise man saw the young and simple straying into the house of the strange woman. The house seemed so completely different from what he knew it to be, that he desired to shed a light upon it, that the young man might not sin in the dark, but might understand the nature of his deeds. The wise man looked abroad, and he saw but one lamp suitable to his purpose; it was named “At the last;” so, snatching this, he held it up in the midst of the strange woman’s den of infamy, and everything was changed from what it had been before: the truth had come to light, and the deceptive had vanished. The young man dreamed of pleasure, in wanton dalliance he hoped to find delight; but when the lamp or “At the last” began to shine, he saw rottenness in his bones, filthiness in his flesh, pains and griefs and sorrows, as the necessary consequence of sin, and, wisely guided, wisely taught, the simple-minded started back and listened to the admonitions of the teacher, “Come not nigh the door of her house, for her gates lead down to the chambers of death.”

Now if this lamp of “At the last” was found so useful in this one particular case, methinks it must be equally useful everywhere else, and it may help us all to understand the truth of matters if we will look at them in the light which this wonderful lamp yields. I can only compare my text in its matchless power to Ithuriel’s spear, with which, according to Milton, he touched the toad and straightway Satan appeared in his true colors. If I can apply my text to certain things to-day, they will come out in their true light; “At the last,” shall be the rod in my hand with which I shall touch tinsel, and it shall disappear and you will see it is not gold, and I will touch

varnish and paint and graining, and you shall understand that they are really what they are, and not what they profess to be: the light of “At the last” shall be the light of truth, the light of wisdom to our souls. It seems to me a fitting occasion for holding up this light this morning, when we have come to the end of the year, and shall in a few short hours be at the beginning of another. This period, like Janus, hath two faces, looking back on the year that is past, and looking forward on the year that is to come, and my four-sided lamp will perhaps gleam afar. I wish that you may have courage enough to look down the vista of the years that you have already lived, and think of everything that you have thought, and spoken, and done, in the light of the beams of this lamp “At the last,” and then I hope you will have holy daring enough to let the same light shine forward on the years yet to come, when your hair shall be grey and the grinders shall fail, and they that look out of the windows shall be darkened. We will, then, examine the past and the future of life in the light of “At the last.” May it teach us wisdom, and make us walk as in the fear of God.

I have said that my lamp has four sides to it, and so it has: we will look at it first in the light which streams from death.

**I.** DEATH is at the last. In some sense it is the last, of this mortal life; it is the last of our period of trial here below; it is the last of the day of grace; it is the last of the day of mortal sin. The tree falleth when we die, and it sprouteth not again; the house is washed from the foundations and it is built no more, if it hath been founded on sin. Death is the end of this present life. And how certain is it to all of us! This year we have had many tokens of its certainty. One might almost compose an almanac for the year 1865, and put down the name of some one of note at least to every month, and I should scarcely exaggerate if I said to every week, in the year. All ranks and classes have been made to feel the arrow of the insatiable archer. From royalty down to poverty the grave has been glutted with its prey. Not late in the year there fell one whose benevolence mingled with sagacity had blessed our land, and who being dead is still remembered by the needy, because he cheapened their bread, and broke down the laws which, while they might have fattened the rich, certainly impoverished the poor. His sagacity could not spare him, and though he is embalmed in the hearts of thousands, yet to the dust he has returned. Swiftly after him there fell one who ruled a mighty people in the flush of victory, when what threatened to be a disruption and a separation had ended in triumph to one side and the nation seemed as if it were about to start on a fresh course of prosperity.

By the assassin's hand he fell. Whatever question there might have been about him in his life, all men conspired to honor him in his death. The ruler of a nation who could subdue a gallant and a mighty foe, could not subdue that old foeman who conquers whom he wills. Abraham Lincoln died as well as Cobden, And there was he who had saved many precious lives by warning mariners of the approaching storm, and thus many a ship had remained in harbour and been delivered from the merciless jaws of the deep, but he could not forecast or escape himself the last dread storm; he, too, must go down into that fathomless deep which swalloweth all mankind. Then, when the year was ripe and the flowers were all in bloom-fit season for his going-there was taken away the man who has garnished our nation with objects of beauty and of joy, a man who loved the flowers and sleeps beneath them now. Like flowers he withered as all of us must do-Sir Joseph Paxton died. Then in the month of September, when the year began to wane, three men at least who had walked with their staff to heaven and read the spheres, astronomers who predicted eclipses and told of comets, men of fame and name-three fell at once. They might tell the eclipse, but they themselves must be eclipsed; and the comet they might foretell the track of, but they themselves are gone from us as those meteoric stars are gone. Then you will remember well, when the year had waned, grown old, it is but a day or two ago, that all were startled by the death of that young-old man who had ruled our nation so long and on the whole so well. We shall not forget that he was taken away from us who was, in some respects, a king throughout our land. Wisdom, cheerfulness, youthful strength such as he possessed, could not avert the time of death. And then, as if the muster roll were not completed, as if death could not be satisfied till the year had yielded up yet another grave, we heard that the oldest of monarchs had been taken away; and though his goodness and his wisdom had guided well the little nation over which he ruled, and given him an influence far more extensive than his own sphere, yet death spared him not, and Leopold must die. It has been a year of dying rather than of living, and you may look upon yourselves and wonder that you are here. Some greener than we are have been cut down. You that are ripe, are you ready? It is marvellous that although so ripe you should have been spared so long.

Now in the light of all these deaths, I want you to look upon mortal sins. They sculpture angels upon gravestones sometimes; then let each angel from the gravestone speak to us this morning, and we will listen to his

words, for wise and solemn they will surely be, and worthy of our notice, as if he had risen from the dead.

Let me take you upstairs to your own dying chamber, for there, perhaps, the lamp will burn best for you. Look at actions which you have thought to be great, and upon which you have prided yourself- how will they look at the last? You made money; you made money fast; you did the thing very cleverly; you praised yourself for it, just as others have praised themselves for conquering nations, or forcing their way to fame, or lifting themselves into eminence. Now you are dying, and what do you think of all that? Is it so great as it seemed to be? Oh, how you leaped up to it, how you strained yourself to reach it, and you have got it, and you are dying. What do you think of it now? The greatest of human actions will appear to be insignificant when we come to die, and especially those upon which men most pride themselves-these will yield them the bitterest humiliation. We shall then say what madmen we must have been to have wasted so much time and energy upon such paltry things. When we shall discover that they were not real, that they were but mere bubbles, mere pretences, we shall then look upon ourselves as demented to have spent the whole of our life and of our energy upon them.

Let us look at our selfish actions in that light. A man says, "I know how to make money," "and I know how to keep it too," says he- and he prides himself that he is not such a fool as to be generous, nor such a simpleton as to give either to God or to the poor. Now, there he lies. Ah! do you know how to keep it now? Can you take it with you? Can you bear so much as a single farthing of it across the river of death? You are come to the water's side- how much of it will you carry through? Ah fool! how much wiser hadst thou been if thou hadst laid up thy treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt! Thou calledst such men fools when thou wast living. What dost thou think them now that thou art dying? Who is the fool, he that sent his goods beforehand, or he that stored them up here to leave them everlastingly? Everything that is selfish will look beggarly when we come to die; but everything which in the sight of God we have done for Christ's sake that has been generous, and self-denying, and noble, will even amidst the vaults of death sparkle with celestial splendor. Some of you have been, during this week, giving to the cause of God right generously, for which I thank you-I think I may also do it in my Master's name-and when I have thought of it, I have said to myself, "Surely, when they come to die, they shall none of them regret that they have served the cause of

God. Ah, if they have even given to the pinching of themselves, it shall be no source of sorrow when they come to the dying bed that they did it unto one of the least of God's little ones." Look at your actions in the light of death, and the selfish ones shall soon pass. I would also, dear friends, that some of you would look at your self-righteousness in the light of death. You have been very good people, very upright, honest, moral, amiable, generous, and so on, and you are resting on what you are. Do you think this will bear your weight when you come to die? When you are in good health any form of religion may satisfy, but a dying soul wants more than sand to rest on. You will want the Rock of Ages. Then let me assure you, that in the light of the grave, all confidence, except confidence in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, is a clear delusion. Fly from it, I beseech thee. Wherefore wilt thou repose beneath a Jonah's gourd that will die before the worm? Seek thou a better shelter; cling thou to the Rock of Ages; find thou the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. The same, I may say, of all confidence in the efficacy of ceremonies and sacraments. When we are in good health it seems a sufficiently satisfactory thing to have been baptized, and to have taken the sacrament and to go to church, and read prayers and all that, and one can get some little water, out of those wells while one is strong and joyous; but when you come to be sick and to die, let me tell you, sacraments will be nothing to you. Baptism and the Lord's Supper will alike deceive you if you rest on them; when you come to die you will find them to be supports too frail to bear the weight of an immortal soul's eternal interests. It will be in vain when you lie dying, if God gives you a quickened conscience to say, "I went to church or to meeting so many times a day." You will find it a poor plaister to your soul's wounds to be able to say, "I made a profession of godliness." Oh your shams will all be rent away from you by the rough hand of the skeleton, Death; you will want a real Savior, vital godliness, true regeneration, not baptismal regeneration; you will want Christ, not sacraments; and nothing short of this will do" at the last."

And, dear friends, let me ask as I hold up the light, How will sin appear when we come to die? It is pleasant now and we can excuse it, calling it a peccadillo, a little trivial mistake, a juvenile error, and imprudence, and so on; but how will sin appear when you come to die? The grim ghosts of our iniquities, if they have not been laid in the grave of Christ Jesus, will haunt our dying bed. That ghastly chamberlain, with finger bloody and red, will draw the curtain round about us. What a horrid prospect, to be shut in with

our sious for ever, to be dying, with no comrades about the bed to comfort, but with the remembrances of the past to terrify and to alarm!

Think, I pray you, not only upon the root and principle of evil, but upon the fruit of it. Remember that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. Do not consider what the thing looks like to-day, but what will it be in the end thereof? Thou warmest the viper in thy bosom, but how wilt thou bear its sting when thou shalt come to lie upon thy last bed? The sea I know is smooth and calm to thee for a moment; but remember, there are storms, there are hurricanes that sweep it, and what will thy poor bark do without Christ for its pilot when the dread storm of death shall come? I wish I could in imagination take you down, down, down to the waters of death, where you shall feel your feet sinking in the dread sand of uncertainty, and hear the booming of the distant sea, and your spirit shall begin to ask, "What is that ocean that I hear?" And there shall come back an answer, "Ye hear the breaking of the everlasting waves; the bottomless sea of eternity is that to which you are descending." You shall feel its chill floods as they come from the ankles to the knees, and from the knees to the loins; and you will find it (if you are without Christ), not a river to swim in, but an ocean to be drowned in for ever, for ever, for ever. Oh, God help you to look at present joys, and actions, and thoughts, and doings, in the light of death! What a contrast there is often between the life of man and his death! You would praise some men if you only saw their lives, but, when you see their deaths, you shift your estimation. There is Moses: he may be the King of Egypt, but he gives up royalty and all its tempting joys. On the mount it is offered to him to be made the founder of a mighty race—a desire always prominent in the Eastern mind, but, instead of desiring himself to be made a great nation, he, unselfishly, desires even to be blotted out of the Book of Life, if God will I)ut spare his people Israel. And what does Moses get for it all? His only earthly reward is to be the leader of a crew of slaves who are perpetually rebelling against him and vexing his holy spirit. Now there is Balaam, on the other hand, he has visitations from God; and when Balak, the son of Zippor, begs him to curse Israel, he cannot curse, though he is quite willing to go as far as he can. He is compelled by the inward Spirit to bless the people, but, after he has done that, for gain and for reward, he plots a plan against Israel by which they were cursed: he bids them send out the women of Moab to lead astray the children of Israel. Now there he goes, with his treasures of silver and gold, back to his own house, and the shrewd busy worldly man says, "That is the

man for me: do not tell me about your meek Moses, that is afraid of doing this and that, and will not look after the main chance. He has thrown away a kingdom, and now he has thrown away the chance of being the head of a nation. That is the man to make money-Balaam. He will be a common councillor, or an alderman, or lord mayor one day-that Balaam. A man must not stick too much at things; he must go ahead, and make hay while the sun shines.

*“There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.”*

That is the man for me who knows when to launch out on the waters and who does not ask if they are dirty or clean if they only waft him onward to wealth and success.” Ah, but they come to die, and Balaam dies-where? He had prayed, “Let my last end be like his “-like the righteous,-and he died in battle, fighting against the righteous and against the God of the righteous. And hard by that very spot Moses also died, and you know how-with visions of Canaan upon his eye, melting into visions of the Canaan which is above, the New Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all. In that death, who would not be Moses, let who will be Balaam in life? Be it yours and mine to aspire to be like Moses, both living and dying. “At the last!” think of that, and whenever you are tempted by sin, or tempted by gain, look at it-” At the last,” “At the last.” God help you to judge righteous judgment.

**II.** And now we will turn to the second side of our lantern. The second of these last things is JUDGMENT. After death the judgment. When we die, we die not. When a man dieth, shall he live again? Ay, that he shall-for his spirit dieth never. God hath made us such strange wondrous beings, with such wide reaching hopes, and such far darting aspirations, that it is not possible we should die and become extinct. The beast hath no longing for immortality; you never hear it sigh for celestial regions: it hath no dread of judgment, because there is no second life, no judgment for the beast that perisheth, But the God who gives to man the dread of things to come, and makes him feel and long after something better than this small globe affords us, cannot have mocked us, cannot have made us more wretched than the beast that perisheth, by giving us passions and desires never to be gratified. We are immortal, every one of us, and when the stars go out and Sol’s great furnace is extinguished for want of fuel, and, like a vesture, God’s wide universe shall be rolled up, we shall be living still, a life as eternal as the Eternal God himself. Oh, when we leave this world, we are



told that after death there comes a judgment to us. I do not know how it is with you-you may be more accustomed to courts of justice than I am-but there always creeps a solemnity over me, even in a common court of justice among men, and especially, when a man is being tried for his life. Laughter seems hushed there, and everything is solemn. How much more dread will be that Court where men shall be tried for their eternal lives, where their souls rather than their bodies shall be at stake! The judgment of one's fellows is not to be despised. A bold good man can afford to laugh at the world's opinion, still it is trying to him, for one's fellows may be right: multitudes of men, if they have really thought upon the matter, may not all be wrong. It is not easy to stand at the bar of public opinion, and receive the verdict of condemnation; but what will it be to stand at the bar of God, who is greater than all, and to receive from him the sentence of damnation! God save us from that!

Let us think of this judgment a moment. We shall rise from the dead: we shall be there in body as well as spirit. These very bodies will stand upon the earth at the latter day: when Christ shall come and the trumpet shall sound, his people shall rise at the first resurrection, and the wicked shall rise also, and in their flesh shall they see God. Let me think of all that I have done then in the light of that. There will be present every man who has ever lived on earth. How shall I like to have all my doings published there? My very thoughts-how shall I feel when they are read aloud; what I whispered in the ear in the closet-how shall I like to have that proclaimed with sound of trumpet! And what I did in the dark-how shall I care to have that revealed in the light? And yet these things must be made known before the assembled universe. There will be present there my enemies. If I have treated them ill, if I have been a backbiter, a slanderer, it will be then declared: if I have been a hypocrite and a dissembler, and made others think me true when I have been false, I shall be unmasked then. Those I have injured will be there. With what alarm will the debauchee see those whom he has seduced stand with fiery eyes to accuse him there! With what horror will the oppressor see the widow and the fatherless, whom he drove to poverty, stand there, swift witnesses against him to condemnation! If I have spread false doctrine, a moral pestilence destroying human souls, my victims shall be there to gather round me in a circle and, like dogs that bay the stag, demanding each of them my blood. They shall all be there, friends and foes; more solemn still, "He" shall be there-the man of men, the grandest among men, because God as well as man, and if I have despised

and rejected his salvation, I shall then see him in another fashion and after another sort.

*“The Lord shall come! but not the same  
As once in lowliness he came,  
A silent Lamb before his foes,  
A weary man, and full of woes.*

*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!”*

How will you face him, you that have despised him? You who have doubted his deity, how will you bear the blaze of it? You rejected and trampled on his precious blood, how will you bear the weight of his almighty arm? When on the cross you would not receive him, and when on the throne you shall not escape from him. That silver scepter which he stretches out now to you, if you refuse to touch it, shall be laid aside, and he will take one of another metal, a rod of iron, and he shall break you in pieces, yea, he shall dash you in pieces like potters' vessels. And God shall be there, manifestly there, that God who is here this morning, on the last day of this year, and who sees your thoughts and reads your minds at this moment, but who is so invisible that you forget that he fills this place, and fills all places; you shall not be able to forget him then. Your eyes shall see him in that day; you shall understand his presence. You will try to be hidden from him; would desire hell itself, and think it a place of shelter, if you could escape from him; but everywhere that fire shall encircle you, shall consume you, for “our God is a consuming fire.” You shall no more be able to escape from yourself than from God. You shall find him as present with you as your own soul will be, and you shall feel his hand of fire searching for the chords of your soul, and sweeping with a doleful Miserere all the heart-strings of your spirit. Misery unspeakable must be yours when the voice of the God-man, shall say, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell.” I would to God that ye would look at all your actions in the light of the day of judgment. Our secret thoughts, let us turn them out this morning; they have been lying by till they are mouldy; let us bring them forth to-day. My thoughts, how will you look in the light of judgment? My professions, my imaginations, my conceptions, how will ye all be when the judgment day shall gleam upon you? My profession, how does that look? I have been baptized in Christ professedly, I wear a

Christian name, I preach the gospel, I am a Church officer or a Church member, how will all this bear the light of that tremendous day? When I am put in the scales and weighed, shall I be the weight that I am labelled? In that dreadful day shall I see the handwriting on the wall, "Mene, Tekel, Upharsin"-" Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting"? or shall I hear the gracious sentence which shall pronounce me saved in Jesus Christ? As to my graces, what must they be in the light of judgment? my own salvation, all the matters of experience and knowledge-how do they all look in that light! I think I have believed: I think I love the Savior: I sometimes hope that I am his; but am I so? Shall I be found to be a true believer at the last? Will my love be mere cant or true affection? Will my graces be mere talk, or will they be found to be the work of God the Holy Ghost? Am I vitally united to Christ or not? Am I a mere pretender, or a true possessor of the things eternal? Oh, my soul, set thou these questions in the light of that tremendous day. I would to God we could now go forward to the day of judgment, in thought at any rate; and since I feel myself quite unable to lead you thither, let me adopt my Savior's words: He says that the day cometh when he shall separate the righteous from the wicked as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. There shall be some on his left hand to whom he shall say, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Depart, ye cursed." Will he say that to you and to me? There will be some on his right hand to whom he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." Shall he say that to you and to me? The one or the other it must be. As I stand here this morning, I seem to feel on my own account, and I wish you all did on yours, what a certain man in court once felt. Sentence was about to be given in his case, or, at least he thought the case would be called on immediately, and he rushed to his solicitor and he said, "Is there nothing left undone? Are you sure? for if I lose this case I am a ruined man." His face was white with anxiety. And so it is with you. Is there nothing left undone? for if you lose this case at God's judgment-seat you are a ruined man. Come hearer, hast thou believed on Christ Jesus, or is faith left undone? Hast thou given up self-righteousness? Hast thou left thy sin? Hast thou given thy heart to the Savior? Is regeneration still unaccomplished? Art thou born again? Art thou in Christ? Art thou saved? If thy case be lost thou art a ruined man. A man ruined here may still retrieve his fortunes; the bankrupt may start again and yet be rich; the captain who has lost a battle may renew the fight and

win the successive victory and begin the campaign anew; but lose the battle of life, and the fight shall be no more. Make bankruptcy in this life's business, and you have no more trading. This is the business of eternity. Soul, is there anything left undone? Brother, sister, is there anything left undone? for if you lose this case, you are ruined, and that to all eternity. I pray you to look at this day and at all your days, the past and the future, in the light of the day of judgment.

**III.** But my lamp-this matchless lamp-has a third side to it, bright, gleaming like a cluster of stars. The third of the last things is HEAVEN, the portion, I trust, of many of us. We hope, when days and years have passed, that full many of us will meet to part no more on the other side of Jordan, in heaven. Now, let us see if we can cast a little light from heaven upon the things present and the things past. You have been toiling-toiling very hard, and wiping the sweat from your brow, and saying, "My lot is not a desirable one. Oh how weary am I! I cannot bear it." Courage, brother, courage, sister; there is rest for the weary; there is eternal rest for the beloved of the Lord, and when thou shalt arrive in heaven, how little, how utterly insignificant thy toil will seem, even if it shall have lasted threescore years and ten. You are pained much; even now pain shoots through your body; you do not often know what it is to have an easy hour, and you half murmur, "Why am I thus? Why did God deal so hardly with me?" Think of heaven, where the inhabitants shall no more say, "I am sick;" where there are no groans to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues. Courage, tried one, Oh it will soon be over; it is but a pin's prick or a moment's pang, and then eternal glory. Be of good cheer, and let not thy patience fail thee. And so thou hast been slandered. On thy face, for Christ's dear name, shame and reproach have been cast, and thou art ready to give up. Come, man, look before thee! Canst thou not hear the acclamations of the angels as the conquerors receive one by one their eternal crowns? What! wilt thou not fight when there is so much to be won? Must thou be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease? Thou must fight if thou wouldst reign. Gird up the loins of thy mind and have respect to the recompense of reward. In the light of heaven, the shame of earth will seem to be less than nothing and vanity. And so you have had many losses and crosses: you were once well-to-do, but you are poor now. You will have to go home to-day to a very poor abode and to a scanty meal, Oh, but beloved, you will not be there long. "In my Father's house are many mansions." It is but an inn thou art tarrying at awhile, and, if the

accommodation be rough, thou art gone to-morrow; so complain not. I would to God we could look upon all our actions in the light of heaven-I mean those who are believers in Jesus Christ. If we could have regrets hereafter, I think it would be that we did not do more than we did for Christ here below. In heaven they cannot feed Christ's poor, cannot teach the ignorant. They can extol him with songs of praise, but there are some things in which we have the preference over them: they cannot clothe the naked, or visit the sick, or speak words of cheer to those that are disconsolate. If there is anything that can give joy in heaven, surely it will be in looking back on the grace which enabled us to serve the Master. Oh, if I can win souls to Christ, I shall be a gainer as well as you. I shall have another heaven in their heaven, another joy as it were in their life, and another happiness in their souls' happiness. And, dear brethren and sisters, if in your Sunday-school teaching, or visiting, or talking to others, you can bring any to glory, you will, if it be possible, multiply your heaven and make it all the more glad and joyful. Now, look at the life of some Christians. They come here, and if I preach what they call a good sermon, they like it and drink it in. They are willing to eat the fat and drink the sweet, but what do they do for Christ? Nothing. What do they give for Christ? Hardly anything. There are a few such among us, and these are generally the most miserable people you meet with-neither a comfort to others, nor yet any joy to themselves. Now, even in heaven, methinks, though no sorrow should be there, it will be only God's wiping it away that will keep them from regretting that they did not do what they might have done on earth. We are saved by grace, blessed be God-by grace alone; but, being saved, we do desire to make known the savor of Christ in every place, and we believe in heaven we shall have joy in having made this known among the sons of men. Look at your joy in the light of heaven, and you will make it other than it now looks.

**IV.** We now turn to the fourth of the four last things, and that is, let us look at all things in the light of HELL, that dread and dismal light, the glare of the fiery abyss. Bring that lantern here. Here is a young man very merry. "Ho! ho!" he sings, "Christians are fools." Hold my light up. There you are without God, without hope, with the great iron gate of death shut upon you and barred for ever, your body in the flames of Tophet, and your soul in the yet more horrible flames of the wrath of God. Who is the fool now? Oh, when your spirits are damned, as they must be if you live without a Savior, you will think laughing a poor thing. Laugh now, sir! Scoff now!

For a few minutes' merriment you sold eternal joys. You had a mess of pottage and you ate it in haste, and you sold your birthright. What think you of it now? It is an awful thing that men should be content, for a few short hours of silly mirth, to fling away their souls. Look at merriment in the glare of the flames of hell. Mark that man in agony down in the vault of hell, he made money by sin, and there he is; he gained the whole world and lost his own soul. How does it look now? "I would give thirty thousand pounds," said an English gentleman when he lay dying, "if any man would prove to me to a demonstration, that there is no hell." Ay, but if he had given thirty thousand worlds that could not be proved, and now, with pangs unutterable, he knows it so. What would you give when once you are lost if you could throw back your gains? If lost spirits could return here, surely they would do what Judas did—throw down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple, and curse themselves that they ever took the gain of this world and destroyed their souls.

And how will unbelief look in the flames of hell? There are no infidels anywhere but on earth: there are none in heaven, and there are none in hell. Atheism is a strange thing. Even the devils never fell into that vice, for "the devils believe and tremble." And there are some of the devil's children that have gone beyond their father in sin, but how will it look when they are for ever lost? When God's toot crushes them, they will not be able to doubt his existence. When he tears them in pieces and there is none to deliver, then their sophistical syllogisms, their empty logic, their brags and bravadoes, will be of no avail. Oh, that they had been wise and had not darkened their foolish hearts, but had turned unto the living God!

And, my dear hearers, I have another thought which will come home to some of your spirits with peculiar power. How will procrastination seem when once you get there? Some of you have been attending this place a long time: you have often had impressions, but you have always said "By and by," "By and by." You have been aroused and aroused again, but still it has been "To-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow." How will to-morrow ring in your ears when once you are lost! What would you not give for another day of mercy, another hour of grace? I feel this morning as if I would do with you what the Roman Ambassadors did with Antiochus. They met him and asked him whether he meant war or peace. He said he must see; and one of them taking his staff, made a circle round him where he stood, and said, "You must answer before you leave that spot. If you step out o that it is war. Now, war or peace?" And I too would draw a

secret circle round you in the pew this morning, and say to you, "Which shall it be, sin or holiness, self or Christ? Shall it be grace or enmity, heaven or hell? And I pray you answer that question in the light of hell. It is a dread light, but it is a revealing one. It is a fire that will devour the scales that are about your blind eyes. God grant that it may scorch those scales away, that you may see now how dreadful a thing it is to be an enemy to God, and be led by his Holy Spirit to apply to Jesus Christ even now. Ab, how will the gospel seem in the light of hell, and how will your indifference to it seem? When I was thinking of preaching this morning, I wished that I could preach as in that light. To think that there are some to whom I have spoken again and again, who during this year have passed away from the world of hope, we fear into the land of despair, is a dreadful thought. Persons that occupied these pews, sat in these aisles, stood far away there, and listened and heard the gospel-and they are gone! Did I warn them fairly, truly? If not-if thou warn them not they shall perish, but their blood will I require at thy hands. My God, by the blood of the Savior, set me free from these men! Oh deliver us from that solemn condemnation. But with those of you that still live, I would be clear of you. Dear hearers, do not you feel that you are mortal? Have not you within you a sense that you are dying? It is a thought that is always with me; life seems so short. It was not so always with me; but the shortness of life now seems to hang over my mind perpetually, and I suppose it must do so over those of you who are thirty, forty, fifty, or sixty, and who frequently see your friends taken away. Now, since you must soon be gone, since there is a world to come, and you believe there is, how can some of you play with these things? How is it that while you are attentive to your business, you leave your soul's business neglected? What are you waiting for, my hearer? Are you waiting for another season? Does not God say, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation"? What are you waiting for? Does not the time past suffice? Oh that you were wise, and would think of your latter end and seek after God! I do conjure you, by the shortness of life, by the certainty of death, by the terrors of judgment, by the glories of heaven, by the pains of hell, ask after the right way and walk therein. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is the gospel, "Whosoever believeth is not condemned." To believe is to trust. Oh that you may have grace to trust your souls with the Lord Jesus now and ever, and then we shall not need to fear those words, "At the last," nor the light of the four last things, Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell. God bless you, for his name's sake.

*“Soon the whole, like a parched scroll,  
Shall before my amazed sight uproll,  
And without a screen at one burst be seen,  
The presence wherein I have ever been.”*

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —**  
*Psalm 148. and 2 Corinthians 6.*



## **PUBLISHERS NOTES**

### **CONTACTING AGES SOFTWARE**

For more information regarding the AGES Digital Library, whether it be about pricing structure, trades for labor or books, current listings, policies — or if you wish to offer suggestions — please write us at...

AGES SOFTWARE • PO BOX 1926 • ALBANY OR 97321-0509

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE DIGITAL LIBRARY?**

The Library consists of books and other literature of enduring value to the Christian community. Our goal since the beginning has been to “make the words of the wise available to all —inexpensively.” We have had in mind the student, teacher, pastor, missionary, evangelist and church worker who needs a high quality reference library, one that is portable, practical and low in cost.

### **ON WHAT BASIS WERE THEY SELECTED?**

Volumes in the Library have been added based on several criteria: usefulness, user request, breadth of content or reputation. This has meant that the collection is eclectic and may include works that contain positions with which we at AGES Software do not agree. This paradox is consistent with our design, however: any useful library consists of books on a wide variety of subjects and sometimes includes information for reference purposes only. The AGES Digital Library hopefully will reflect — as its components are released — the necessary breadth and depth for a solid personal library.

### **HOW WERE THESE VOLUMES PREPARED?**

Most of the books and documents have been scanned or typed from works that have entered the public domain. Some have been reproduced by special arrangement with the current publisher or holder of the copyright. They have been put in a format that can be readily used by computer users everywhere.

### **ARE THESE EXACT COPIES OF THE ORIGINAL WORKS?**

Usually not. In the process of preparing the Library, we at AGES Software have taken the liberty to make certain edits to the text. As we discovered errors in spelling, certain archaic forms, typographical mistakes or

omissions in the original we have done our best to correct them. Our intention has been to remove anything that might obscure the meaning or otherwise detract from the usefulness of a book for the modern reader. We have, however, attempted to retain the essential content and thoughts of the original — even when we found ourselves in disagreement.

### **WHY IS THE DIGITAL LIBRARY COPYRIGHTED?**

While much of the content is in the public domain, the transcription, form and edits of these works took many people many hours to accomplish. We ask each purchaser to respect this labor and refrain from giving away copies of this or any volume of the Library without written permission from AGES Software. Our policy, however, is to work with each individual or organization to see that the price of Digital Library volumes not be a hindrance in their reaching the hands of those who need them. If price is an obstacle, please contact us at the address above and present your situation.