

THE NEW PARK STREET PULPIT

VOLUME 3

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By Charles H. Spurgeon

PREFACE

WE do most heartily give thanks unto the Father of Mercies for His abundant goodness to us through another year. The past year has been a period of peculiar and special blessing. It was preceded by a storm of trouble which well-near overwhelmed us—"but the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of the birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

The congregations during this year have been immense and enthusiastic. Vast numbers have no doubt been attracted by curiosity which was excited by the fearful catastrophe—and thus the Lord has brought good out of evil. If the matter had ended here, there would have been little cause for rejoicing and great reason for anxiety. But the Lord, the Holy Spirit, has been pleased to apply His own Word with power to the hearts of many who are now the living witnesses of the saving power of the Gospel! Our Church Meetings have been joyous occasions for we have there heard marvelous stories of profligates reclaimed, drunkards converted, and desponding souls delivered.

While the doctrine contained in these sermons is precisely the same as that of the preceding volumes, yet the subjects are of a different class, and it is not possible for the preacher to dive very frequently into the deep things of God. His anxiety for the salvation of souls leads him to select themes which are more awakening than instructive, and therefore more adapted for the babes in grace than for strong men in Christ Jesus. The Sermons preached at the Music Hall are intended to arrest the attention of the careless, and alarm the consciences of the hardened. The reader will not, therefore, find in them that fullness and depth of doctrine which he may desire.

During the past year the sale of these sermons has been more than doubled, and the most gratifying testimonials of their usefulness have been received from every quarter of the globe. Unto the Lord be all the praise!

I shall soon issue a volume of my earliest productions, while Pastor of Waterbeach, (to be Published by Messrs. Alabaster and Passmore), and would now pray for a favorable reception for it.

But turning from these personal matters, the Author would say a word to the saints of the Lord in every place.

Brethren—all hail! The goodwill of Israel's Triune-Jehovah rest with you, and every covenant blessing be yours in rich enjoyment.

We have reason at this season to be very thankful for the manifest signs of progress in our midst. Perhaps no year since the apostolic times has witnessed so much effort in preaching the gospel. The divine leaven is gradually stirring the whole lump. Some of the more lethargic have been quickened, and even the most active have increased their diligence. So far we take courage and lift our Ebenezer.

But brethren, allow the word of exhortation; we need more *purity of doctrine*. In many pulpits, the deep things of God are kept in the dark. Free grace, in its discrimination and omnipotence is not yet preached by the mass of our ministers. The Sovereignty of Jehovah is impugned; and His electing love is sneered at. Let us sigh and cry for this.

Again, how much is *earnest prayer* still needed. Your prayer meetings are not what they should be, and private prayer is too much neglected. Hundreds of our churches are as sound asleep as the graveyards which surround their meeting houses, and some of them are nearly as rotten as the corpses in their tombs. Routine Ministers, Domineering Deacons, Hypocritical Professors, Crab-tree Critics, and Covetous Members, are not all dead, yet. May divine mercy soon grant us grace to see the last of them.

Above all, let us watch for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with joy and patience. Let us in all tribulation comfort one another with this blessed hope, and in all our labors let us take courage from the blessed assurance of His advent.

That the Holy Spirit may be abundantly granted unto you, is the earnest prayer of

The Servant of Christ and the Church,

C. H. Spurgeon

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FAITH

NO. 107

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 14, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”
Hebrews 11:6.***

THE old Assembly's Catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man?" And its answer is, "To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." The answer is exceedingly correct. But it might have been equally truthful if it had been shorter. The chief end of man is, "to please God," for in so doing—we need not say it, because it is an undoubted fact—in so doing He will please Himself. The chief end of man, we believe, in this life and in the next, is to please God, his Maker. If any man pleases God, he does that which conduces most to his own temporal and eternal welfare. Man cannot please God without bringing to himself a great amount of happiness, for if any man pleases God, it is because God accepts him as His child! It is because He gives him the blessings of adoption, pours upon him the bounties of His grace, makes him a blessed man in this life and insures him a crown of everlasting life which he shall wear and which shall shine with unfading luster when the wreaths of earth's glory have all been melted away. While, on the other hand, if a man does *not* please God, he inevitably brings upon himself sorrow and suffering in this life. He puts a worm and a rottenness in the eve of all his joys. He fills his death pillow with thorns and he supplies the eternal fire with firewood of flames which shall forever consume him! He who pleases God, is, through divine grace, journeying onward to the ultimate reward of all those who love and fear God! But he who is not pleasing to God, must, for Scripture has declared it, be banished from the Presence of God and, consequently, from the enjoyment of happiness! If then, we are right in saying that to please God is to be happy, the one important question is, how can I please God? And there is something very solemn in the utterance of our text—"Without faith it is impossible to please God." That is to say, do what you may, strive as earnestly as you can, live as excellently as you please, make what sacrifices you choose, be as eminent as you can for everything that is lovely and of good repute—yet none of these things can be pleasing to God unless they are mixed with faith! As the Lord said to the Jews, "With all your sacrifices, you must offer salt." So He says to us, "With all your doings, you must bring faith, or else without faith it is impossible to please God."

This is an old law of God. It is as old as the first man. No sooner were Cain and Abel born into this world and no sooner had they attained to manhood than God gave a practical proclamation of this law, that, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." Cain and Abel, one bright day, erected an altar, side by side with each other. Cain fetched of the fruits of the trees and of the abundance of the soil and placed them upon his altar. Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock and laid it upon his altar. It was to be decided which God would accept. Cain had brought his best, but he brought it without faith. Abel brought his sacrifice, but he brought it with faith in Christ. Now, then, which shall best succeed? The offerings are equal in value—so far as they, themselves are concerned—they are, alike, good. Upon which will the heavenly fire descend? Which will the Lord God consume with the fire of His pleasure? Oh, I see Abel's offering burning and Cain's countenance has fallen, for unto Abel and unto his offering, the Lord had respect—but unto Cain and his offering, the Lord had no respect. It shall be the same till the last man shall be gathered into heaven—there shall never be an acceptable offering which has not been seasoned with faith! Good, though it may be—as apparently good, in itself, as that which has faith—yet, unless faith is with it, God never can and never will accept it, for He, here, declares, "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

I shall endeavor to pack my thoughts closely, this morning, and be as brief as I consistently can, with a full explanation of the theme. I shall first have an exposition of what is faith. Secondly, I shall have an *argument*, that without faith it is impossible to be saved. And thirdly, I shall ask a question—Have you that faith which pleases God? We shall have, then, an exposition, an argument and a question.

I. First, for the EXPOSITION—What is faith?

The old writers, who are, by far, the most sensible—for you will notice that the books that were written about 200 years ago by the old Puritans have more sense in one line than there is in a page of our new books—and more in a page than there is in a whole volume of our modern divinity! The old writers tell you that faith is made up of three things—first, knowledge, then assent and then what they call affiance—or the laying hold of the knowledge to which we give assent and making it our own by trusting in it.

1. Let us begin, then, at the beginning. The first thing in faith is knowledge. A man cannot believe what he does not know! That is a clear, self-evident axiom. If I have never heard of a thing in all my life and do not know it, I cannot believe it. And yet there are some persons who have a faith, like that of the coal miner, who when he was asked what he believed said, "I believe what the Church believes." "What does the church believe?" "The Church believes what I believe." "And pray tell, what do

you and the Church believe?” “Why we both believe the same thing.” Now this man believed nothing except that the church was right—but in *what*, he could not tell. It is idle for a man to say, “I am a believer,” and yet not to know what he believes! But I have seen some persons in this position. A violent sermon has been preached which has stirred up their blood. The minister has cried, “Believe! Believe! Believe!” And the people, all of a sudden, have got it into their heads that they were believers and have walked out of their place of worship and said, “I am a believer.” And if they were asked, “Pray tell, what do you believe?” they could not give a reason for the hope that was in them! They believe they intend to go to chapel next Sunday. They intend to join that class of people. They intend to be very violent in their singing and very wonderful in their rant. Therefore they believe they shall be saved—but what they believe, they cannot tell. Now, I hold no man’s faith to be sure faith unless he knows what he believes. If he says, “I believe,” and does not know what he believes, how can that be true faith? The apostle has said, “How can they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach except they are sent?” It is necessary, then, to true faith, that a man should know something of the Bible. Believe me, this is an age when the Bible is not so much thought of as it used to be. Some hundred years ago the world was covered with bigotry, cruelty and superstition. We always run to extremes and we have just gone to the other extreme, now. It was then said, “One faith is right, down with all others by the rack and by the sword.” Now it is said, “However contradictory our creeds may be, they are *all* right.” If we did but use our common sense, we would know that it is not so! But some reply, “Such-and-such a doctrine need not be preached and need not be believed.” Then, sir, if it need not be preached, it need not be revealed! You ridicule the wisdom of God when you say a doctrine is unnecessary—for you do as much as say that God has revealed something which was not necessary—and He would be as unwise to do more than was necessary, as if He had done less than was necessary! We believe that every doctrine of God’s Word ought to be studied by men and that their faith should lay hold of the whole matter of the Sacred Scriptures and more especially upon all that part of Scripture which concerns the person of our all-blessed Redeemer! There must be some degree of knowledge before there can be faith. “Search the Scriptures,” then, “for in them you think you have eternal life and they are they which testify of Christ.” And by searching and reading, comes knowledge—and by knowledge comes *faith*—and through faith comes *salvation*.

2. But a man may know a thing and yet not have faith. I may know a thing and yet not believe it. Therefore *assent* must go with faith—that is to say, what we know, we must also agree unto as being most certainly

the truth of God. Now, in order to have faith, it is necessary that I should not only read the Scriptures and understand them, but that I should receive them in my soul as being the very truth of the living God. And I should devoutly, with my whole heart, receive the whole of Scripture as being Inspired of the Most High and the whole of the doctrine which He requires me to believe to my salvation. You are not allowed to halve the Scriptures and to believe what you please. You are not allowed to believe the Scriptures with a half-heartedness, for if you do this willfully, you have not the faith which looks alone to Christ! True faith gives its full assent to the Scriptures. It takes a page and says, "No matter what is in the page, I believe it." Faith turns over the next chapter and says, "Herein are some things hard to be understood, which they who are unlearned and unstable, do twist, as they do the other Scriptures, to their destruction. But hard though it is, I believe it." It sees the Trinity. It cannot understand the Trinity in Unity but it believes it. Faith sees an atoning Sacrifice. There is something difficult in the thought, but it believes it. And whatever it is which it sees in Revelation, it devoutly puts his lips to the book and says, "I love it all. I give my full, free and hearty assent to every word of it whether it is the threat or the promise, the proverb, the precept, or the blessing. I believe that since it is all the Word of God, it is all most assuredly true." Whoever would be saved must know the Scriptures and must give full assent unto them!

3. But a man may have all this and yet not possess true faith. For the chief part of faith lies in the last head, namely, in an *affiance* to the truth—not merely the believing it, but the taking hold of it as being ours and in the resting on it for salvation. Recumbency on the truth was the word which the old preachers used. You will understand that word, *leaning* on it—saying, "This is truth, I trust my salvation on it." Now, true faith, in its very essence rests in this—a *leaning* upon Christ. It will not save me to know that Christ is a Savior. But it will save me to trust Him to *be* my Savior! I shall not be delivered from the wrath to come by believing that His atonement is sufficient, but I shall be saved by making that atonement my trust, my refuge and my all! The essence, the *essence* of faith lies in this—a casting oneself on the promise. It is not the lifebuoy on board the ship that saves the man when he is drowning, nor is it his belief that it is an excellent and successful invention. No! He must have it around his loins, or his hand upon it—or else he will sink. To use an old and trite illustration—suppose a fire in the upper room of a house and the people gathered in the street. A child is in the upper story—how is he to escape? He cannot leap down—that were to be dashed to pieces. A strong man comes beneath and cries, "Drop into my arms." It is a part of faith to know that the man is there—it is another part of faith to believe that the man is strong—but the *essence* of faith lies in the dropping

down into the man's arms—that is the *proof* of faith and the real essence of it! So, sinner, you are to know that Christ died for sin. You are also to understand that Christ is able to save. And you are to believe that, but you are not saved unless, in addition to that, you put your trust in Him to be your Savior and to be yours forever! As Hart says in his hymn, which really expresses the gospel—

***“Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!”***

This is the faith which saves! And however unholy may have been your lives up to this hour, this faith, if given to you at this moment, will blot out all your sins, change your nature and make you a new man in Christ Jesus! It will lead you to live a holy life and make your eternal salvation as secure as if an angel should take you on his bright wings, this morning, and carry you immediately to heaven! Have you that faith? That is the one all-important question, for while with faith men are saved, without it, men are damned! As Brooks has said in one of his admirable works, “He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, be his sins ever so many. But he that believes not in the Lord Jesus must be damned, be his sins ever so few.” Have you faith? For the text declares, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”

II. And now we come to the ARGUMENT—*why* without faith, we cannot be saved.

Now, there are some gentlemen present who are saying, “Now we shall see whether Mr. Spurgeon has any logic in him.” No, you won't, sirs, because I never pretended to exercise it! I hope I have the logic which can appeal to men's hearts, but I am not very prone to use the less powerful logic of the head when I can win the heart in another manner. But if it were necessary, I would not be afraid to prove that I know more of logic and of many other things than the little men who undertake to censure me! It were well if they knew how to hold their tongues, which is at least a fine part of rhetoric. My argument shall be such as I trust will appeal to the heart and conscience, although it may not exactly please those who are always so fond of syllogistic demonstration—

***“Who could a hair divide
Between the west and north-west side.”***

1. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” And I gather it from the fact that there has never been the case of a man, recorded in Scripture, who did please God without faith. The 11th chapter of Hebrews is the chapter of the men who pleased God. Listen to their names—“By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice.” “By faith, Enoch was translated.” “By faith, Noah built an ark.” “By faith, Abraham went out into a place that he should afterwards receive.” “By faith, he so-

journed in the land of promise.” “By faith, Sarah bore Isaac.” “By faith, Abraham offered up Isaac.” “By faith, Moses gave up the wealth of Egypt.” “By faith, Isaac blessed Jacob.” “By faith, Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph.” “By faith, Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel.” “By faith, the Red Sea was dried up.” “By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down.” “By faith, the harlot Rahab was saved.” “And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and of Barak and of Samson and of Jephthae, of David, also, and Samuel and of the prophets.” All these were men of faith. Others mentioned in Scripture have *done* something, but God did not accept them. Men have humbled themselves and yet God has not saved them. Ahab did and yet his sins were never forgiven. Men have repented and yet have not been saved, because theirs was the wrong repentance. Judas repented and went and hanged himself and was not saved. Men have confessed their sins and have not been saved. Saul did it. He said to David, “I have sinned against you, my son, David.” And yet he went on as he did before. Multitudes have confessed the name of Christ and have done many marvelous things—and yet they have never been pleasing to God—from this simple reason that they had not faith. And if there is not one mentioned in Scripture, which is the history of some four thousand years, it is not likely that in the other two thousand years of the world’s history there would have been one, when there was not one during the first four thousand!

2. But the next argument is *faith is the stooping grace* and nothing can make a man stoop without faith! Now, unless man does stoop, his sacrifice cannot be accepted. The angels know this. When they praise God, they do it veiling their faces with their wings. The redeemed know it. When they praise God, they cast their sorrows before His feet. Now, a man who has not faith proves that he cannot stoop. He has not faith for this reason—because he is too proud to believe! He declares he will not yield his intellect, he will not become a child and believe meekly what God tells him to believe. He is too proud and he cannot enter heaven because the door of heaven is so low that no one can enter in by it unless they will bow their heads. There never was a man who could walk into salvation erect! We must go to Christ on our bended knees. For though He is a door big enough for the greatest sinner to come in, He is a door so low that men must stoop if they would be saved. Therefore it is, that faith is necessary, because a lack of faith is certain evidence of absence of humility.

3. But now for other reasons. Faith is necessary to salvation because we are told in Scripture that *works cannot save*. To tell a very familiar story so even the poorest may not misunderstand what I say—a minister was, one day, going to preach. He climbed a hill on his road. Beneath

him lay the villages, sleeping in their beauty, with the corn fields motionless in the sunshine. But he did not look at them, for his attention was arrested by a woman standing at her door and who, upon seeing him, came up to him with the greatest anxiety and said, "O sir, have you any keys about you? I have broken the key of my cabinet and there are some things that I must get right now." Said he, "I have no keys." She was disappointed, expecting that everyone would have some keys. "But suppose," he said, "I had some keys—they might not fit your lock and, therefore, you could not get the articles you need. But do not distress yourself, wait till someone else comes up. But," he said, wishing to improve the occasion, "have you ever heard of the key of heaven?" "Ah, yes," she said, "I have lived long enough and I have gone to church long enough to know that if we work hard, if we get our bread by the sweat of our brow and act well towards our neighbors, if we behave, as the Catechism says, lowly and reverently to all our betters, and if we do our duty in that station of life in which it has pleased God to place us and say our prayers regularly, we shall be saved." "Ah," he said, "My good woman, that is a broken key, for you have broken the commandments, you have not fulfilled all your duties! It is a good key, but you have broken it." "Pray tell, sir," she said, believing that he understood the matter and, looking frightened, "What have I left out?" "Why," he said, "the all-important thing! The blood of Jesus Christ! Don't you know it is said the key of heaven is at His belt? He opens and no man shuts. He shuts and no man opens." And explaining it more fully to her, he said, "It is Christ and Christ, alone, who can open heaven to you—not your good works." "What? Minister," she asked, "are our good works useless, then?" "No," he said, "not *after* faith! If you believe, first, you may have as many good works as you please. But if you believe, you will never trust in *them*, for if you trust in *them* you have spent them and they are not good works any longer. Have as many good works as you please, but still put your trust wholly in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not, your key will never unlock heaven's gate."

So then, my hearers, we must have true faith because the old key of works is so broken by us all, that we never shall enter Paradise by it! If any of you pretend that you have no sins, to be very plain with you, you deceive yourselves and the truth is not in you! If you conceive that by your good works you shall enter heaven, never was there a more fell delusion! You shall find at the last great day that your hopes were worthless and that, like dried leaves from the autumn trees, your noble doings shall be blown away, or kindled into a flame within, and you, yourselves, must suffer forever! Take heed of your good works! Get them *after* faith, but remember, the way to be saved is simply to believe in Jesus Christ!

4. Again—without faith it is impossible to be saved and to please God—because without faith there is no union to Christ. Now, union to Christ is indispensable to our salvation. If I come before God’s Throne with my prayers, I shall never get them answered unless I bring Christ with me! The Molossians of old, when they could not get a favor from their king, adopted a singular expedient. They took the king’s only son in their arms and, falling on their knees, cried, “O King, for your son’s sake, grant our request.” He smiled and said, “I deny nothing to those who plead my son’s name.” It is so with God! He will deny nothing to the man who comes having Christ at his elbow! But if he comes alone, he must be cast away! Union to Christ is, after all, the great point in salvation. Let me tell you a story to illustrate this—the stupendous falls of Niagara have been spoken of in every part of the world. But while they are marvelous to hear of and wonderful as a spectacle, they have been very destructive to human life, when, by accident any have been carried down them. Some years ago, two men were being carried so swiftly down the current that they must both inevitably be borne down and dashed to pieces. Persons on the shore saw them but were unable to do much for their rescue. At last, however, one man was saved by floating a rope to him, which he grasped. The same instant that the rope came into his hand a log floated by the other man. The thoughtless and confused bargeman, instead of seizing the rope, laid hold on the log! It was a fatal mistake. They were both in imminent peril, but the one was drawn to shore because he had a connection with the people on the land, while the other, clinging to the log, was borne irresistibly along and never heard of afterwards. Do you not see that here is a practical illustration? Faith is a connection with Christ. Christ is on the shore, so to speak, holding the rope of faith—and if we lay hold of it with the hand of our confidence, He pulls us to shore. But our good works, having no connection with Christ, are drifted along down the gulf of fell despair! Grapple them as tightly as we may, even with hooks of steel, they cannot avail us in the least degree! You will see, I am sure, what I wish to show to you. Some object to anecdotes. I shall use them till they have done objecting to them. The truth is never more powerfully set forth to men than by telling them stories or parables as Christ often did.

Faith, then, is a union with Christ. Take care you have it! For if not, cling to your works and there you go floating down the stream! Cling to your works and there you go dashing down the gulf! Lost because your works have no hold on to Christ and no connection with the blessed Redeemer! But you, poor sinner, with all your sin about you, if the rope is round your loins and Christ has a hold of it, fear not—

***“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep.
All that His heavenly Father gave,***

His hands securely keep.”

5. Just one more argument and then I have done with it. “Without faith it is impossible to please God”—because *it is impossible to persevere in holiness without faith*. What a multitude of fair-weather Christians we have in this age! Many Christians resemble the nautilus, which, in fine, smooth weather, swims on the surface of the sea in a splendid little squadron, like the mighty ships! But the moment the first breath of wind ruffles the waves, they take in their sails and sink into the depths. Many Christians are the same. In good company, in evangelical drawing rooms, in pious parlors, in chapels and vestries, they are tremendously religious! But if they are exposed to a little ridicule, if some should smile at them and call them Methodist, or Presbyterian, or some name of reproach, it is all over with their religion till the next fine day! Then when it is fine weather and religion will answer their purpose, up go the sails, again, and they are as pious as before! Believe me, that kind of religion is worse than irreligion! I like a man to be thoroughly what he is—a downright man. And if a man does not love God, do not let him say he does. But if he is a true Christian, a follower of Jesus, let him say it and stand up for it! There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. The only thing to be ashamed of is to be hypocritical. Let us be honest to our profession and it will be our glory. Ah, what would you do without faith in times of persecution? You good and pious people who have no faith, what would you do if the stakes were again erected in Smithfield and if, once more, the fires consumed the saints to ashes? What would you do if the Lollard’s tower was again opened? If the rack were again piled, or in event stocks were used, as they have been used by a Protestant Church as witness to the persecution of my predecessor, Benjamin Keach, who was once set in the stocks at Aylesbury for writing a book against infant baptism? If even the mildest form of persecution were revived, how would the people be scattered abroad! And some of the shepherds would be leaving their flocks!

Another anecdote, now, and I hope it will lead you to see the necessity of faith, while it may lead me on insensibly to the last part of my discourse. A slaveholding American, on one occasion buying a slave, said to the person of whom he was purchasing him, “Tell me honestly what are his faults.” Said the seller, “He has no faults that I am aware of but one, and that one is he will pray.” “Ah,” said the purchaser, “I don’t like that. I know something that will cure him of it pretty soon.” So the next night Cuffey was surprised by his master in the plantation, while in earnest prayer, praying for his new master and his master’s wife and family. The man stood and listened but said nothing at that time. But the next morning he called Cuffey and said, “I do not want to quarrel with you, my man, but I’ll have no praying on my premises—so you just drop it.” “Massa,” he said “me canna leave off praying. Me must pray.” “I’ll teach

you to pray, if you are going to keep on at it.” “Massa, me must keep on.” “Well, then, I’ll give you 25 lashes a day till you leave off.” “Massa, if you give me fifty, I must pray.” “If that’s the way you are saucy to your master, you shall have it directly.” So tying him up, he gave him 25 lashes and asked him if he would pray again. “Yes, Massa, me must pray always, me canna leave off.” The master looked astonished! He could not understand how a poor saint could keep on praying when it seemed to do no good, but only brought persecution upon him. He told his wife of it. His wife said, “Why can’t you let the poor man pray? He does his work very well. You and I do not care about praying, but there’s no harm in letting him pray if he gets on with his work.” “But I don’t like it,” said the master, “he almost frightened me to death. You should see how he looked at me!” “Was he angry?” “No, I should not have minded that. But after I had beaten him, he looked at me with tears in his eyes, and as if he pitied me more than himself.” That night the master could not sleep. He tossed to and fro on his bed. His sins were brought to his remembrance. He remembered he had persecuted a saint of God. Rising in his bed, he said, “Wife, will you pray for me?” “I never prayed in my life” she said, “I cannot pray for you.” “I am lost,” he said, “if somebody does not pray for me. I cannot pray for myself.” “I don’t know anyone on the estate that knows how to pray, except Cuffey,” said his wife. The bell was rung, and Cuffey was brought in. Taking hold of his black servant’s hand, the master said, “Cuffey, can you pray for your master?” “Massa” he said, “me been praying for you ever since you flogged me, and me means to pray always for you.” Down went Cuffey on his knees and poured out his soul in tears—and both husband and wife were converted! That slave could not have done this without faith! Without faith he would have gone away, directly, and said, “Massa, me leave off praying. Me no like de white man’s whip.” But because he persevered through his faith, the Lord honored him and gave him his master’s soul for his hire!

III. And now in conclusion, THE QUESTION, the vital question. Dear hearer have you faith? Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart? If so, you may hope to be saved! Yes, you may conclude with absolute certainty that you shall never see hell. Have you faith? Shall I help you to answer that question? I will give you three tests, as briefly as ever I can, not to weary you and then, farewell, this morning. He who has faith, has renounced his own righteousness. If you put one atom of trust in yourself you have no faith! If you place even a particle of reliance upon anything else but what Christ did, you have no faith! If you trust in your works, then your works are anti-Christ and Christ and anti-Christ can never go together! Christ will have all or nothing! He must be a whole Savior, or none at all. If, then, you have faith, you can say—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the ceoss I cling.”***

Then true faith may be known by this—it begets a great esteem for the person of Christ. Do you love Christ? Could you die for Him? Do you seek to serve Him? Do you love His people? Can you say—

***“Jesus, I love Your charming name,
‘Tis music to my ear.”***

Oh, if you do not love Christ, you do not believe in Him, for to believe in Christ begets love. And yet more—he that has true faith will have true *obedience*. If a man says he has faith and has no works, he lies! If any man declares that he believes in Christ and yet does not lead a holy life, he lies! While we do not trust in good works, we know that faith always begets good works! Faith is the father of holiness and he has not the parent who loves not the child. God’s blessings are blessings with both His hands. In the one hand, He gives pardon. But in the other hand, He always gives holiness—and no man can have the one, unless he has the other!

And now, dear hearers, shall I get down upon my knees and entreat you for Christ’s sake to answer this question in your own silent chamber—Have you faith? Oh, answer it—Yes, or No? Leave off saying, “I do not know,” or, “I do not care.” Ah, you will care, one day, when the earth is reeling and the world is tossing to and fro! You will care when God shall summon you to judgment and when He shall condemn the faithless and the unbelieving! Oh, that you were wise—that you would care, now, and if any of you feel your need of Christ, let me beg of you, for Christ’s sake, now, to seek faith in Him who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission and who, if He has given you repentance, will give you remission, too! Oh sinners who know your sins! “Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved.” Cast yourselves upon His love and blood, His doing and His dying, His miseries and His merits—if you do this, you shall never fall but you shall be saved, now—and saved in that great day when not to be saved will be horrible, indeed! “Turn you, turn you! Why will you die, O house of Israel?” Lay hold on Him, touch the hem of His garment and you shall be healed. May God help you to do so; for Christ’s sake. Amen and Amen.

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THE QUESTION OF FEAR AND THE ANSWER OF FAITH NO. 108

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING,
AUGUST 31, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

*“Will He plead against me with His great power?
No, but He would put strength in me.”
Job 23:6.*

I SHALL not, tonight, consider the connection of these words, or what was particularly intended by Job. I shall use them in, perhaps, another sense from that which he intended. No doubt Job meant to say that if God would allow him to argue his case before Him, it was his firm belief that God, so far from taking advantage of His superior strength in the controversy, would even strengthen him, that the controversy might be fair and that the judgment might be unbiased. “He would not plead against me with His great strength. No, but He would put strength in me.” We shall use the text, however, tonight, in another sense.

It is one of the sure marks of a lost and ruined state when we are careless and indifferent concerning God. One of the peculiar marks of those who are dead in sin is this—they are the wicked who forget God. God is not in all their thoughts. “The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.” The sinful man is always anxious to keep out of his mind the very thought of the being, the existence, or the character of God. And as long as man is unregenerate, there will be nothing more abhorrent to his taste, or his feelings than anything which deals with the Divine Being. God, perhaps, as Creator, he may consider. But the God of the Bible, the infinite Jehovah, judging righteously among the sons of men—condemning and acquitting—that God he has no taste for! He is not in all his thoughts, nor does he regard Him. And mark you, it is a blessed sign of the work of grace in the heart when man begins to consider God. *He* is not far from God’s heart who has meditations of God in his own heart. If we desire to seek after God, to know Him, to understand Him and to be at peace with Him, it is a sign that God has dealings with our soul, for otherwise we would still have hated His name and abhorred His character.

There are two things in my text, both of which have relation to the Divine Being. The first is, *the question of fear*—"Will He plead against me with His great power?" And the second is, *the answer of faith*—"No, but He will put strength in me." The fearful and the prayerful, who are afraid of sin and fear God, together with those who are faithful and believe in God are in a hopeful state! And hence, both the question of the one and the answer of the other have reference to the great Jehovah, our God, who is forever to be adored!

I. We shall consider, in the first place, tonight, THE INQUIRY OF FEAR. "Will He plead against me with His great power?" I shall consider this as a question asked by the convicted sinner. He is seeking salvation, but when he is bid to come before his God and find mercy, he is compelled by his intense anxiety to make the trembling inquiry, "Will He plead against me with His great power?"

1. And, first, I gather from this question the fact that *a truly penitent man has a right idea of many of God's attributes*. He does not understand them all, for instance he does not yet know God's great mercy. He does not yet understand His unbounded compassion. But as far as his knowledge of God extends, he has an extremely great view of Him. To him, the everlasting Jehovah appears great in every attribute and action and supremely great in His Majesty. The poor *worldling* knows there is a God. But He is to him a little God. As for the justice of God, the mere worldly man scarcely ever thinks of it. He considers that there is a God, but he regards Him as a Being who has little enough respect for justice. Not so, however, the sinner. When God has once convicted him of his sin, he sees God as a *great* God, a God of *great* justice and of *great* power. Whoever may misunderstand God's great justice or God's great power, a convicted sinner never will! Ask him what he thinks of God's justice and he will tell you it is like the great mountains. It is high—he cannot attain unto it. "Ah," he says, "God's justice is very mighty. It *must* smite me. He must hurl an avalanche of woe upon my devoted head. Justice demands that He should punish me. I am so great a sinner that I cannot suppose He would ever pass by my transgression, my iniquity and my sin." It is all in vain for you to tell such a man that God is little in His justice. He replies, "No," most solemnly, "No." And you can most plainly read his earnestness in his visage, when he replies, "No." He replies, "I feel that God is just. I am even now consumed by His anger. By His wrath I am troubled." "Tell me God is not Just?" he says, "I know He is. I feel that within an hour or two hell must swallow me up unless divine mercy delivers me. Unless Christ shall wash me in His blood, I feel I can never hope to stand among the ransomed." He has not that strange idea of

God's justice that some of you have. You think sin is a trifle! You suppose that one brief prayer will wipe it all away! You dream that by attendance at your churches and at your chapels you will wash away your sins! You suppose that God, for some reason or other, will very easily forgive your sin. But you have not a right idea of God's justice! You have not learned that God never forgives until He has first punished—and that if He does forgive anyone—it is because He has punished Christ, first, in the place of that person! But he never forgives without first exacting the punishment. That would be an infringement on His justice. And shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? You have, many of you, lax enough ideas of the justice of the Divine Being. But not so the sinner who is laboring under a knowledge of sin!

An awakened soul feels that God is greatly *powerful*. Tell him that God is but a weak God and he will answer you—and shall I tell you what illustrations he will give you to prove that God is great in power? He will say, "Oh, sir, God is great in power as well in justice. Look up yonder—can you not see in the dark past, when rebel angels sinned against God—they were so mighty that each one of them might have devastated Eden and shaken the earth? But God, with ease, hurled Satan and the rebel angels out of heaven and drove them down to hell." "Sir," says the sinner, "is He not mighty?" And then he will go on to tell you how God unbound the swaddling bands of the great ocean that it might leap upon the earth. And how He bade it swallow up the whole of mortal race, save those who were hidden in the ark. And the sinner says, with his eyes well near starting from their sockets—"Sir, does not this prove that He is great in power and will, by no means, acquit the wicked?" And then he proceeds, "Look again at the Red Sea. Mark how Pharaoh was enticed into its depths and how the parted sea, that stood aloof for a while to give the Israelites an easy passage, embraced with eager joy, locked the adverse host within their arms and swallowed them up quickly!" And as he thinks he sees the Red Sea rolling over the slain, he exclaims, "Sir, God is great in power! I feel He must be, when I think of what He has done." And as if he had not finished his oration and would let us know the whole of the greatness of God's power, he continues his narration of the deeds of vengeance. "O sir, remember, He must be great in power, for I know that He has dug a hell which is deep and large, without bottom. He has made a Tophet—the pile thereof is fire and much wood and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it. Yes, beyond a doubt," groans the trembling soul, "He must be great in power! I feel He is and I feel more than that—I feel that justice has provoked God's arm of power to smite me—and unless I am covered in that right-

eousness of Christ, I shall, before long, be dashed to pieces and utterly devoured by the fury of His wrath.” The sinner, as far as the harsher attributes of God’s nature are concerned, when he is under conviction, has a very fair and a just idea of the Divine Being! Though, as I have remarked before, he does not yet understand the mercy and the infinite compassion of God towards His Covenant people. He has too harsh a view of God, dwelling only upon the darker side and not upon those attributes which shed a more cheering light upon the darkness of our misery. That is the first truth which I glean from the text.

2. The second truth which I gather from this question, “Will He plead against me with His great power?” is this—that *the trembling sinner feels that every attribute of God is against him as a sinner.* “Oh,” he will say, “I look to God and I can see nothing in Him but a consuming fire! I look to His justice and I see it, with sword unsheathed, ready to smite me low! I look to His power and I behold it, like a mighty mountain, tottering to its fall to crush me! I look to His immutability and I think I see stern justice written on its brow and I hear it cry, “Sinner, I will not save, I will condemn you.” “I look to his *faithfulness* and I mark that all His threats are as much, ‘Yes and amen,’ as His promises. I look to His love but even His love frowns and accuses me, saying, ‘You have slighted Me.’ I look to His mercy but even His mercy launches out the thunderbolt with accusing voice, reminding me of my former hardness of heart and harshly chiding me thus, ‘Go you to justice and glean what you can, there. I, even I, am against you, for you have made Me angry!’”

Oh, trembling penitent, where are you, tonight? Somewhere here, I know you are! Would to God there were many like you! I know you will agree with me in this statement, for you have a dread apprehension that every attribute of the Divine Being’s character is armed with fire and sword to destroy you! You see all His attributes like heavy pieces of ordnance, all pointed at you and ready to be discharged! Oh that you may find a refuge in Christ! And oh, you who never were convicted of sin, let me, for one moment, lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet. Know this—perhaps you laugh at it—that all God’s attributes are against you if you are not in Christ! If you are not sheltered beneath the wings of Jesus, there is not one single glorious name of God, nor one celestial attribute which does not curse you! What would you think, if at your door, tonight, there should be planted great pieces of heavy cannon, all loaded, to be discharged against you? But do you know that where you sit, tonight, there are worse than heavy cannons to be discharged at you? Yes, I see them, I see them! There is God’s justice and there is the Angel of Vengeance, standing with the match, ready to bid it hurl venge-

ance at you. There is His power. There is His bare arm, ready to break your bones and crush you into powder! There is His love, all blazing, turned to hate because you rejected it. And there is His mercy, clad with mail, going forth like a warrior to overthrow you! What say you, O sinner, tonight? Against *you* all of God's attributes are pointed! He has bent His bow and made it ready. The sword of the Lord has been bathed in heaven. It is bright and sharp, it is furbished. How will you escape when a mighty arm shall bring it down upon you? Or how will you flee when He shall draw His bow and shoot his arrows at you and make you a mark for all the arrows of His vengeance? BEWARE, BEWARE, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver! For tear you in pieces He will—unless you shelter in the Rock of Ages and wash yourselves in the stream of His wondrous blood! Fly to Him, then, you chief of sinners, fly! But if you will not, know this—God is against you! He will plead against you with His great power unless you have our all-glorious Jesus to be your advocate.

3. And just one more hint. The sinner, when he is laboring on account of guilt, feels that God would be just if He were to “plead against him with His great power.” “Oh,” he says, “If I go to God in prayer, perhaps, instead of hearing me, He will crush me as I would a moth.” What, soul, would He be just if He did that? “Yes,” says the sinner, “Just, supremely just. Perhaps if I strip myself of all my ornaments and, like a naked one, fly to Him—perhaps then He will lash me harder than before and I shall feel it all the worse for this, my nakedness.” And will He be just; should the flagellation of His vengeance fall upon your shoulders? “Yes,” he says, “Infallibly just.” And should He smite you to the lowest hell, would He be just? “Yes,” says the penitent, “Just, infinitely just. I would have no word to say against Him. I would feel that I deserved it all. My only question is not whether He would be just to do it, but *will He do it?*” “Will He plead against me with His great power?” This is the question of fear. Some here, perhaps, are asking that question—now let them hear the reply of faith. God give them a good deliverance!

II. THE REPLY OF FAITH IS, “No.” O sinner, hear that word, “No.” There are sonnets condensed into it. “Will He plead against me with His great power?” “No, NO,” say the saints in heaven. “NO,” say the faithful on earth. “NO,” say the promises. “NO,” unanimously exclaim the oracles of Scripture! NO, most emphatically, NO! He will *not* plead against you with His great power but He will put strength into you!

1. And here we make a similar remark to that with which we commenced the former part of the sermon, namely, this—*the fearful soul has a very right view of God in many respects, but the faithful soul has a right*

view of God in all respects! He who has faith in God, knows more of God than he who only fears Him. He who believes God, understands God better than any man. Why, if I believe God, I can see all His attributes vindicated. I can see the wrath of justice expiated by yonder bleeding sufferer on the accursed tree! I can see His mercy and His justice joining hands with His wrath! I can see His power now turned on my behalf and no longer against me. I can see His faithfulness become the guardian of my soul instead of the slaughterer of my hopes! I can see all His attributes standing, each of them conjoined, each of them glorious, each of them lovely and all united in the work of man's salvation! He that *fears* God knows only half of God. He that *believes* God knows *all* of God that He can know. And the more he believes God, the more he understands God, the more he comprehends His Glory, His character, His nature and His attributes.

2. The next thing is that *the believer, when he is brought into peace with God, does not tremble at the thought of God's power.* He does not ask, "Will He plead against me with His great power?" But he says, "No that very power, once my terror and fear, is now my refuge and my hope, for He shall put that very power in me! I rejoice that God is Almighty, for He will lend me His omnipotence—'He will put strength into me.'" Now, here is a great thought! If I had power to handle it, it would give me opportunity, indeed, to preach to you. But I cannot reach the heights of eloquence; I shall therefore simply exhibit the thought for a moment to you. The very power which would have damned my soul, saves my soul. The very power that would have crushed me, God puts into me so that the work of salvation may be accomplished. No, He will not use it to crush me, but He will put that very strength *into* me! Do you see, there, the Mighty One upon His throne? Dread sovereign, I see Your awful arm! What? Will You crush the sinner? Will You utterly destroy him with Your strength? "No," He says, "Come here, My Child." And if you go to His Almighty throne, "There," He says, "that same arm which made you quake, see there, I give it to you! Go out and live. I have made you mighty as I am, to do My works. I will put strength into you. The same strength which would have broken you to pieces on the wheel shall now be put *into* you, that *you* may do mighty works!"

Now, I will show you how this great strength displays itself. Sometimes it goes out in prayer. Did you ever hear a man pray in whom God had put strength? You have heard some of us poor puny souls pray, I dare say, but have you ever heard a man pray who God had made into a giant? Oh, if you have, you will say it is a mighty thing to hear such a man in supplication! I have seen him as if he had seized the angel and would

pull him down. I have seen him, now and then, slip in his wrestling. But, like a giant, he has recovered his footing and seemed, like Jacob, to hurl the angel to the ground! I have marked the man lay hold upon the throne of mercy and declare, "Lord, I will never let go, except You bless me." I have seen him, when heaven's gates have been apparently barred, go up to them and say, "You gates, open wide in Jesus' name!" And I have seen the gates fly open before him, as if the man were God, Himself, for he is armed with God Almighty's strength! I have seen that man, in prayer discover some great mountain in his way. And he prayed it down, until it became a very molehill. He has beaten the hills and made them like chaff, by the immensity of his might! Some of you think I am talking enthusiasm. But such cases have been and are now. Oh, to have heard Luther pray! Luther, you know, when Melancthon was dying, went to his deathbed and said, "Melancthon, you shall not die!" "Oh," said Melancthon, "I must die! It is a world of toil and trouble." "Melancthon," he said, "I have need of you, and God's cause has need of you, and as my name is Luther, you shall not die!" The physician said he would. Well, down went Luther on his knees and began to tug at death. Old death struggled mightily for Melancthon and he had got him well near on his shoulders. "Drop him," said Luther, "drop him, I need him!" "He," said death, "he is my prey, I will take him!" "Down with him," said Luther, "down with him, death, or I will wrestle with you!" And he seemed to take hold of the grim monster and hurl him to the ground! And he came off victorious, like an Orpheus, with his wife, up from the very shades of death! He had delivered Melancthon from death by prayer! "Oh," you say, "that is an extraordinary case." No, beloved, not one-half as extraordinary as you dream. I have men and women here who have done the same in other cases. They have asked a thing of God and have had it. That have been to the throne and showed a promise and said they would not come away without its fulfillment and have come back from God's throne conquerors of the Almighty, for prayer moves the arm that moves the world! "Prayer is the sinew of God," said one, "it moves His arm." And so it is. Verily, in prayer, with the strength of the faithful heart, there is a beautiful fulfillment of the text, "He will put strength in me."

A second illustration. Not only in prayer but in *duty*. The man who has great faith in God and whom God has girded with strength, how gigantic does he become? Have you ever read of those great heroes who put to flight whole armies and scattered kings like the snow on Salmon? Have you ever read of those men that were fearless of foes and stalked onward before all their opposers, as if they would as soon die as live? I read, this day, of a case in the old kirk of Scotland, before that King James who

wished to force the black prelacy upon them. Andrew Melville and some of his associates were deputed to wait upon the king and, as they were going with a scroll ready written, they were warned to take care and return, for their lives were at stake. They paused a moment and Andrew said, "I am not afraid, thank God, nor feeble-spirited in the cause and message of Christ. Come what pleases God to send, our commission shall be executed." At these words the deputation took courage and went forward. On reaching the palace and having obtained an audience, they found his majesty attended by Lennox and Arran and several other lords, all of whom were English. They presented their remonstrance. Arran lifted it from the table and glancing over it, he then turned to the ministers and furiously demanded, "Who dares sign these treasonable articles?" "WE dare," said Andrew Melville, "and will render our lives in the cause." Having thus spoken, he came forward to the table, took the pen, subscribed his name and was followed by his brethren. Arran and Lennox were confounded. The king looked on in silence and the nobles in surprise. Thus did our good forefathers appear before kings and yet were not ashamed. "The proud had them greatly in derision, yet they declined not from the law of God." Having thus discharged their duty, after a brief conference, the ministers were permitted to depart in peace. The king trembled more at them than if a whole army had been at his gates. And why was this? It was because God had put His own strength into them, to make them masters of their duty! And you have some such in your midst now. They may be despised, but God has made them like the lion-like men of David who would go down into the pit in the depth of winter and take the lion by the throat and slay him. We have some in our churches—but a remnant, I admit—who are not afraid to serve their God! Like Abdiel, they are "faithful among the faithless found." We have some who are superior to the customs of the age and scorn to bow at mammon's knee—who will not use the trimming language of too many modern ministers but stand out for God's gospel and the pure white banner of Christ—unstained and unsullied by the doctrines of men. Then are they mighty! *Why* they are mighty is because God has put strength in them!

Still, some say, I have dealt with extraordinary cases. Come then, now we will have a home-case, one of your own sort that will be like yourselves! Did you ever stand and take a view of heaven? Have you discerned the hills which lie between your soul and Paradise? Have you counted the lions you have to fight, the giants to be slain and the rivers to be crossed? Did you ever notice the many temptations with which you must be beset, the trials you have to endure, the difficulties you have to

overcome, the dangers you have to avoid? Did you ever take a bird's-eye view of heaven and all the dangers which are thickly strewn along the path? And did you ever ask yourself this question, "How shall I, a poor feeble worm, ever get there?" Did you ever say within yourself, "I am not a match for all my foes, how shall I arrive at paradise?" If you have ever asked this question, I will tell you what is the only answer for it—you must be girded with Almighty strength or else you will never gain the victory! Easy your path may be, but it is too hard for your infantile strength without Almighty power. Your path may be one of little temptation and of shallow trial. But you will be drowned in the floods, yet, unless Almighty power preserves you. Mark me! However smooth your way, there is nothing short of the bare arm of Deity that can land any of you in heaven! We must have divine strength, or else we shall never get there. And there is an illustration of these words—"No, but He will put His strength in me."

"And shall I hold on to the end?" says the believer. Yes, you will, for God's strength is in you. "Shall I be able to bear such-and-such a trial?" Yes, you will. Cannot omnipotence stem the torrent? And omnipotence is in you! Like Ignatius of old, you are a God-bearer. You bear God about with you! Your heart is a temple of the Holy Spirit and you shall yet overcome. "But can I ever stand firm in such-and-such an evil day?" Oh, yes you will, for He will put His strength in you. I was in company, some time ago, with some ministers. One of them observed, "Brother, if there were to be stakes in Smithfield again, I am afraid they would find very few to burn among us." "Well," I said, "I do not know anything about how you would burn. But this I know right well, that there always will be those who are ready to die for Christ." "Oh," he said, "but they are not the right sort of men." "Well," I said, "but do you think they are the Lord's children?" "Yes, I believe they are, but they are not the right sort." "Ah," I said, "but you would find them the right sort if they came to the test, every one of them! They have not yet got burning grace! What would be the use of it?" We do not need the grace till the stakes come. But we shall have burning grace in burning moments. If now, tonight, a hundred of us were called to die for Christ, I believe there would not only be found a hundred but five hundred that would march to death and sing all the way! Whenever I find faith, I believe that God will put strength into the man. And I never think anything to be impossible to a man with faith in God, while it is written, "He will put strength in me."

3. But now the last observation shall be, we shall all need this at the last—and it is a mercy for us that this is written, for never shall we require it, perhaps, more than then. *O believer, do you think you will be able to swim the Jordan with your own strength?* Caesar could not swim

the Tiber, equipped as he was. And do you hope to swim the Jordan with your flesh about you? No, you will sink, unless Jesus—as Aeneas did Anchises, from the flames of Rome, upon his shoulders—lifts you from Jordan and carries you across the stream—you will never be able to walk across the river! You will never be able to face that tyrant and smile in his face unless you have something more than mortal. You will need, then, to be belted about with the belt of divinity, or else your loins will be loosed and your strength will fail you, when you need it most! Many a man has ventured to the Jordan in his own strength. But oh, how he has shrieked and howled, when the first wave has touched his feet! But never weakling went to death with God within him but he found himself mightier than the grave! Go on, Christian, for this is your promise. “He will put strength in me”—

***“Weak, though I am, yet through His might,
I all things can perform.”***

Go on! Dread not God’s power but rejoice at this—He will put His strength in you—He will not use His power to crush you.

Just one word, and then farewell. There is within reach of my voice, I am thoroughly convinced, one who is seeking Christ, whose only fear is this—“Sir, I would, but I cannot pray. I would, but I cannot believe. I would, but I cannot love. I would, but I cannot repent.” Oh, hear this, soul—“HE WILL PUT HIS STRENGTH IN YOU.” Go home. And down on your knees, if you cannot pray, groan! If you cannot groan, weep! If you cannot weep, feel! If you cannot feel, feel because you cannot feel, for that is as far as many get. But stop there—mark you, stop there—and He will give you His blessing! Do not get up till you have got the blessing. Go there in all your weakness. If you do not feel it, say, “Lord, I do not feel as I ought to feel—but oh that I could! Lord, I cannot repent as I would repent—oh that You would help me!” “Oh, sir,” you say, “but I could not go as far as that, for I don’t think I have got a strong desire.” Go and say, “Lord I would desire. Help me to desire.” And then sit down and think of your lost estate. Think of your ruin and the remedy and think on that. And mark you, while you are on the way, the Lord will meet with you. Only believe this that if you try Christ, He will never let you try in vain! Go and risk your soul on Christ, tonight, neck or nothing, sinner! Go now, break or make! Go and say, “Lord, I know I must be damned if I have not Christ.” Stay there and say, “If I perish, I perish only here.” And I tell you, you will never perish! I am a bonds man for God—this head to the block if your soul goes to hell if you pray sincerely and trust Christ! This neck to the gallows, again, I say, this neck to the rope and to the hangman’s gallows, if Christ rejects you after you have earnestly sought

Him! Only try that, I beseech you, poor soul. “Oh,” you say, “but I have not strength enough. I cannot do that.” Well, poor soul, crawl to the mercy Seat and there lie flat, just as you are. You know that misery often speaks when it utters not a word. The poor cripple squats himself down in the street. He says nothing. There protrudes a ragged knee and there is a wounded hand. He says nothing. But with his hands folded on his breast he looks at every passerby. And though not a word is spoken, he wins more than if he daily drawled out his tale, or sung it along the street! So do you—sit like Bartimaeus by the wayside begging. And if you hear Him pass by, then cry, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me!” But if you can scarcely say that, sit there and exhibit your poor wounds. Tell the Lord your desperate condition. Strip your loathsome sores and let the Almighty see the venom. Turn out your heart and let the rank corruption be all inspected by the Almighty eyes. “And He has mercies rich and free.” Who can tell poor sinner, who can tell? He may look on you—

***“Jesus died upon the tree
And why, poor sinner, not for thee?
His sovereign grace is rich and free,
And why, poor sinner, not for thee?
Our Jesus loved and saved ME!
Say why, poor sinner, why not THEE?”***

Only do this and if you are a sinner, hear this—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” He will not, “Plead against you with His great power; no, He will put His strength in you!” The Lord dismiss you with His blessing!

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GOING HOME—A CHRISTMAS SERMON NO. 109

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING,
DECEMBER 21, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Go home to your friends, and tell them how great things
the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.”
Mark 5:19.*

THE case of the man here referred to is a very extraordinary one—it occupies a place among the memorabilia of Christ’s life, perhaps as high as anything which is recorded by either of the evangelists! This poor wretch, being possessed with a legion of evil spirits, had been driven to something worse than madness. He fixed his home among the tombs where he dwelt by night and day and was the terror of all those who passed by. The authorities had attempted to curb him. He had been bound with fetters and chains, but in the violent outbursts of his madness, he had torn the chains in sunder and broken the fetters in pieces. Attempts had been made to reclaim him, but no man could tame him. He was worse than the wild beasts—for they might be tamed. But his fierce nature would not yield. He was a misery to himself for he would run upon the mountains by night and day—crying and howling fearfully—cutting himself with the sharp flints and torturing his poor body in the most frightful manner. Jesus Christ passed by; He said to the devils, “Come out of him.” The man was healed in a moment—he fell down at Jesus’ feet. He became a rational being—an intelligent man. Yes, what is more—a convert to the Savior! Out of gratitude to his deliverer, he said, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go. I will be Your constant companion and Your servant, permit me to be so.” “No,” said Christ, “I esteem your motive, it is one of gratitude to Me, but if you would show your gratitude, go home to your friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.”

Now this teaches us a very important fact, namely this—that true religion does not break in sunder the bonds of family relationship. True religion seldom encroaches upon that sacred, I had almost said, *divine* institution called *home*. It does not separate men from their families and make them aliens to their flesh and blood. Superstition has done that. An awful superstition, which calls itself, Christianity, has sundered men from their kind. But true religion has never done so! Why, if I might be

allowed to do such a thing, I would seek out the hermit in his lonely cavern and I would go to him and say, “friend, if you are what you profess to be—a true servant of the living God and not a hypocrite, as I guess you are—if you are a true believer in Christ and would show forth what He has done for you, upset that pitcher, eat the last piece of your bread. Leave this dreary cave, wash your face, untie your hemp belt—and if you would show your gratitude, go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you! Can you edify the dried leaves of the forest? Can the beasts learn to adore that God whom your gratitude should strive to honor? Do you hope to convert these rocks and wake the echoes into songs? No, go back—dwell with your friends, reclaim your kinship with men and unite, again, with your fellows—for this is Christ’s approved way of showing gratitude.” And I would go to every monastery and every nunnery and say to the monks, “Come out brethren, come out! If you are what you say you are, servants of God, go home to your friends! No more of this absurd discipline. It is not Christ’s rule! You are acting differently from what He would have you do—go home to your friends!” And to the sisters of mercy we would say, “Be sisters of mercy to your own sisters—go home to your friends—take care of your aged parents! Turn your own houses into convents—do not sit here nursing your pride by a disobedience to Christ’s rule, which says, “Go home to your friends.” “Go home to your friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.” The love of a solitary and ascetic life—which is by some considered to be a divine virtue—is neither more nor less than a disease of the mind! In the ages when there was but little benevolence and, consequently, few hands to build lunatic asylums, superstition supplied the lack of charity and silly men and women were allowed the indulgence of their fancies in secluded haunts or in easy laziness! Young has most truly said—

***“The first sure symptoms of a mind in health
Are rest of heart and pleasure found at home.”***

Avoid, my friends, above all things, those romantic and absurd conceptions of virtue which are the offspring of superstition and the enemies of righteousness! Be not without natural affection, but love those who are knit to you by ties of nature.

True religion cannot be inconsistent with nature! It can never demand that I should abstain from weeping when my friend is dead. “Jesus wept.” It cannot deny me the privilege of a smile when providence looks favorably upon me. For once Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, “Father, I thank You.” It does not make a man say to his father and mother, “I am no longer your son.” That is not Christianity, but something worse than what beasts would do—which would lead us to be entirely sundered from our fellows—to walk among them as if we had no kinship with them. To

all who think a solitary life must be a life of piety, I would say, "It is the greatest delusion!" To all who think that those must be good people who break the ties of relationship, let us say, "Those are the best who maintain them." Christianity makes a husband a better husband! It makes a wife a better wife than she was before! It does not free me from my duties as a son. It makes me a better son, and my parents better parents. Instead of weakening my love, it gives me fresh reason for my affection. And he whom I loved before as my father, I now love as my brother and co-worker in Christ Jesus; and she whom I revered as my mother, I now love as my sister in the covenant of grace to be mine forever in the state that is to come. Oh, suppose not any of you, that Christianity was ever meant to interfere with households! It is intended to cement them and to make them households which death, itself, shall never sever—for it binds them up in the bundle of life with the Lord, their God, and reunites the several individuals on the other side of the flood.

Now, I will tell you the reason why I selected my text. I thought within myself there are a large number of young men who always come to hear me preach. They always crowd the aisles of my Chapel and many of them, by His grace, have been converted to God. Now, here is Christmas Day come round, again, and they are going home to see their friends. When they get home they will want a Christmas Carol in the evening. I think I will suggest one to them—more especially to such of them as have been lately converted—I will give them a theme for their discourse on Christmas evening. It may not be quite so amusing as, "The Wreck of the Golden Mary," but it will be quite as interesting to Christian people. It shall be this—"Go home and tell your friends what the Lord has done for your souls and how He has had compassion on you." For my part, I wish there were 20 Christmas days in the year! It is seldom that young men can meet with their friends. It is rarely they can all be united as happy families. And though I have no respect to the *religious* observance of the day, yet I love it as a family institution! It is one of England's brightest days—the great Sabbath of the year—when the plow rests in its furrow. When the din of business is hushed—when the mechanic and the working man go out to refresh themselves upon the green turf of the glad earth! If any of you are employers, you will pardon me for the digression when I most respectfully beg you to pay your employees the same wages on Christmas Day as if they were at work. I am sure it will make their houses glad if you will do so. It is unfair for you to make them feast or fast, unless you give them wherewithal to feast and make themselves glad on that day of joy!

But now to come to the subject. We are going home to see our friends, and here is the story some of us have to tell. "Go home to your friends,

and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.” First, *here is what they are to tell*; then, secondly, *why they are to tell it*; and then thirdly, *how they ought to tell it*.

I. First, then, HERE IS WHAT THEY ARE TO TELL. It is to be a story of *personal* experience. “Go home to your friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.” You are not to repair to your houses and forthwith begin to preach. *That* you are not commanded to do! You are not to begin to take up doctrinal subjects and speak at length on them and endeavor to bring persons to your peculiar views and sentiments. You are not to go home with sundry doctrines you have lately learned and try to teach these. At least you are not commanded to do so. You may, if you please and none shall hinder you. But you are to go home and tell not what you have *believed* but what you have *felt*—what you really know to be your own! Not what great things you have read, but what great things the Lord has *done for you*. Not, alone, what you have seen done in the great congregation and how great sinners have turned to God, but what the Lord has done for *you*. And mark this—there is never a more interesting story than that which a man tells about himself! The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner derives much of its interest because the man who told it was himself, the mariner. He sat down, that man whose finger was skinny, like the finger of death and began to tell that dismal story of the ship at sea in the great calm when slimy things did crawl with legs over the shiny sea. The wedding guests sat still to listen, for the old man was, himself, a story. There is always a great deal of interest excited by a personal narrative. Virgil, the poet, knew this and, therefore, he wisely makes Aeneas tell his own story and makes him begin it by saying, “In which I also had a great part, myself.” So, if you would interest your friends, tell them what you felt yourself. Tell them how you were once a lost, abandoned sinner, how the Lord met with you, how you bowed your knees and poured out your soul before God and how, at last, you leaped with joy, for you thought you heard Him say within you, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My name’s sake.” Tell your friends a story of your own personal experience!

Note, next, it must be a story of *free grace*. It is not, “Tell your friends how great things *you* have done yourself,” but, “how great things *the Lord* has done for you.” The man who always dwells upon free will and the power of the creature, but denies the doctrines of grace, invariably mixes up a great deal of what he has done, himself, in telling his experience. But the believer in free grace, who holds the great cardinal truths of the gospel, ignores this and declares, “I will tell what the Lord has done for

me. It is true I must tell how I was first made to pray. But I will tell it thus—

***“Grace taught my soul to pray
Grace made my eyes overflow.”***

It is true, I must tell in how many troubles and trials God has been with me. But I will tell it thus—

***“It was grace which kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.”***

He says nothing about his own doings, or willings, or prayers, or seeking—but ascribes it all to the love and grace of the great God who looks on sinners in love and makes them His children—heirs of everlasting life! Go home, young man, and tell the poor sinner’s story! Go home, young woman, and open your diary and give your friends stories of divine grace. Tell them of the mighty works of God’s hand which He has worked in you from His own free, sovereign, undeserved love. Make it a free grace story around your family fire!

In the next place, this poor man’s tale was a *grateful* story. I know it was grateful because the man said, “I will tell you how great things the Lord has done for me.” And (not meaning a pun in the least degree) I may observe that a man who is grateful, is always full of the greatness of the mercy which God has shown him. He always thinks that what God has done for him is immensely good and supremely great. Perhaps when you are telling the story, one of your friends will say, “And what of that?” And your answer will be, “It may not be a great thing to you, but it is to me. You say it is little to repent but I have not found it so. It is a great and precious thing to be brought to know myself to be a sinner, and to confess it—do you say it is a little thing to have found a Savior?” Look them in the face and say, “If you had found Him, too, you would not think it little. You think it little I have lost the burden from my back? If you had suffered with it and felt its weight as I have, for many a long year, you would think it no little thing to be emancipated and free through a sight of the cross.” Tell them it is a great story and if they cannot see its greatness, shed great tears and tell it to them with great earnestness and I hope they may be brought to believe that you, at least, are grateful, if they are not. May God grant that you may tell a *grateful* story; no story is more worth hearing than a tale of gratitude!

And lastly, upon this point—it must be a tale told by a poor sinner who feels himself not to have deserved what he has received. “How He has had *compassion* on you.” It was not a mere act of kindness, but an act of free compassion towards one who was in misery. Oh, I have heard men tell the story of their conversion and of their spiritual life in such a way that my heart has loathed *them* and their story, too, for they have told of their sins as if they did boast in the greatness of their crime! And

they have mentioned the love of God not with a tear of gratitude—not with the simple thanksgiving of the really humble heart—but as if they as much exalted *themselves* as they exalted God. Oh, when we tell the story of our own conversion, I would have it done with deep sorrow—remembering what we used to be—and with great joy and gratitude, remembering how little we deserve these things. I was once preaching upon conversion and salvation and I felt within myself, as preachers often do, that it was but dry work to tell this story and a dull, dull tale it was to me, but all of a sudden the thought crossed my mind, “Why, you are a poor lost ruined sinner, yourself! Tell it, tell it, as you received it! Begin to tell of the grace of God as *you* trust you feel it, yourself.” Why, then, my eyes began to be fountains of tears—those hearers who had nodded their heads began to brighten up and they listened because they were hearing something which the man felt, himself, and which they recognized as being true to him—if it were not true to them. Tell your story, my hearers, as lost sinners! Do not go to your home and walk into your house with a supercilious air, as much as to say, “Here’s a saint come home to the poor sinners to tell them a story.” But go home like a poor sinner! And when you go in, your mother remembers what you used to be—you need not tell her there is a change—she will notice it—if it is only one day you are with her. And perhaps she will say, “John, what is this change that is in you?” And if she is a pious mother, you will begin to tell her the story and I know, man though you are, you will not blush when I say it—she will put her arms round your neck and kiss you as she never did before—for you are her *twice-born* son! Hers from whom she shall never part, even though death, itself, shall divide you for a brief moment. “Go home, then, and tell your friends what great things the Lord has done for you and how He has had compassion on you.”

II. But now, in the second place—WHY SHOULD WE TELL THIS STORY? For I hear many of my congregation say, “sir, I could relate that story to anyone sooner than I could to my own friends! I could come to your vestry and tell you something of what I have tasted and handled of the Word of God, but I could not tell my father, nor my mother, nor my brothers, nor my sisters.” Come, then. I will try and argue with you to induce you to do so—that I may send you home this Christmas Day to be missionaries in the localities to which you belong and to be real preachers! Dear friends, do tell this story when you go home.

First, for your *Master’s sake*. Oh, I know you love Him. I am sure you do—if you have proof that He loves you! You can never think of Gethsemane and of its bloody sweat, of Gabbatha and of the mangled back of Christ, flayed by the whip—you can never think of Calvary and His pierced hands and feet without loving Him! And it is a strong argument

when I say to you, for His dear sake, who loved you so much, go home and tell it. What? Do you think we can have so much done for us and yet not tell it? *Our* children, if anything should be done for them, do not stay many minutes before they are telling all the company, “Such an one has given me such a present and bestowed on me such-and-such a favor.” And should the children of *God* be backward in declaring how they were saved when their feet made haste to hell and how redeeming mercy snatched them as brands from the burning? You love Jesus, young man! I put it to you, then, will you refuse to tell the tale of His love to you? Shall your lips be dumb when His honor is concerned? Will you not, wherever you go, tell of the God who loved you and died for you? This poor man, we are told, “departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him and all men did marvel.” So with you; if Christ has done much for you, you cannot help it—you must tell it! My esteemed friend, Mr. Oneken, a minister in Germany, told us last Monday evening that as soon as he was converted, himself, the first impulse of his new-born soul was to do good to others. And where should he do that good? Well, he thought he would go to Germany! It was his own native land and he thought the command was, “Go home to your friends, and tell them.” Well, there was not a single Baptist in all Germany, nor any with whom he could sympathize, for the Lutherans had swerved from the faith of Luther and gone aside from the truth of God. But he went there and preached—and he has now 70 or 80 churches established on the continent! What made him do it? Nothing but love for his Master who had done so much for him could have forced him to go and tell his kinsmen the marvelous tale of divine goodness!

But, in the next place, are your friends pious? Then go home and tell them, in order *to make their hearts glad*. I received last night a short letter, written with a trembling hand, by one who is past the natural age of man living in the county of Essex. His son, under God, had been converted by hearing of the Word preached and the good man could not help writing to the minister, thanking him and blessing, most of all, his God, that his son had been regenerated. “Sir,” he begins, “an old rebel writes to thank you and, above all, to thank his God, that his dear son has been converted.” I shall treasure up that epistle. It goes on to say, “Go on! And the Lord bless you.” And there was another case I heard some time ago where a young woman went home to her parents and when her mother saw her, she said, “There! If the minister had made me a present of all London, I should not have thought so much of it as I do of this—to think that you have really become a changed character and are living in the fear of God!” Oh, if you want to make your mother’s heart leap within her and to make your father glad—if you would make that sister happy who

sent you so many letters which sometimes you read against a lamp-post, with your pipe in your mouth—go home and tell your mother that her wishes are all accomplished! That her prayers are heard, that you will no longer tease her about her Sunday school class and no longer laugh at her because she loves the Lord! Tell her that you will go with her to the house of God, for you love God and you have said, “Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God, for I have a hope that your heaven shall be my heaven forever.” Oh, what a happy thing it would be if some here who had gone astray should thus go home! It was my privilege a little while ago to preach for a noble institution for the reception of women who had led abandoned lives. Before I preached the sermon, I prayed to God to bless it and in the printed sermon you will notice that at the end of it, there is an account of two persons who were blessed by that sermon and restored. Now, let me tell you a story of what once happened to Mr. Vanderkist, a city missionary, who toils all night long to do good in that great work. There had been a drunken broil in the street. He stepped between the men to part them, and said something to a woman who stood there, concerning how dreadful a thing it was that men should thus be intemperate. She walked with him a little way and he, with her, and she began to tell him such a tale of woe, and sin, too—how she had been lured away from her parents’ home in Somersetshire and had been brought up here to her soul’s eternal hurt. He took her home with him and taught her the fear and love of Christ. And what was the first thing she did, when she returned to the paths of godliness and found Christ to be the sinner’s Savior? She said, “Now, I must go home to my friends.” Her friends were written to—they came to meet her at the station at Bristol and you can hardly conceive what a happy meeting it was! The father and mother had lost their daughter—they had never heard from her. And there she was, brought back by the agency of this institution [The London Female Dormitory] and restored to the bosom of her family! Ah, is there such a one here? I know not, among such a multitude, if there may be such a one. Woman! Have you strayed from your family? Have you left them long? “Go home to your friends,” I beseech you, before your father totters to his grave and before your mother’s gray hairs sleep on the snow-white pillow of her coffin. Go back, I beseech you! Tell her you are penitent. Tell her that God has met with you—that the young minister said, “Go back to your friends.” And if so, I shall not blush to have said these things, though you may think I ought not to have mentioned them. For if I may but win one such soul, I will bless God to all eternity! “Go home to your friends! Go home and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you.”

Can you imagine the scene, when the poor demoniac mentioned in my text went home? He had been a raving madman! And when he came and knocked at the door, don't you think you see his friends calling to one another in affright, "Oh, there he is again," and the mother running upstairs and locking all the doors because her son had come back who was raving mad; and the little ones crying because they knew what he had been before—how he cut himself with stones because he was possessed with devils? And can you picture their joy when the man said, "Mother! Jesus Christ has healed me! Let me in. By His grace I am no more a lunatic!" And when the father opened the door, he said, "Father! I am not what I was—all the evil spirits are gone! By God's grace I shall live in the tombs no longer. I need to tell you how the glorious man who worked my deliverance accomplished the miracle—how He said to the devils, 'Get you hence,' and they ran down a steep place into the sea. And I am come home healed and saved!" Oh, if such a one, possessed with sin, were here this morning and would go home to his friends to tell them of his release—I think the scene would be somewhat similar.

Once more, dear friends. I hear one of you say. "Ah, sir, would to God I could go home to pious friends! But when I go home, I go into the worst of places. For my home is among those who never knew God themselves, and consequently never prayed for me and never taught me anything concerning heaven." Well, young man, go home to your friends. If they are ever so bad, they are still your friends. I sometimes meet with young men wishing to join the church who say when I ask them about their father, "Oh, sir, I am parted from my father." Then I say, "Young man, you may just go and see your father before I have anything to do with you. If you are at ill-will with your father and mother, I will not receive you into the church; if they are ever so bad, they are still your parents." Go home to them and tell them, not to make them glad, for they will very likely be angry with you—but tell them *for their soul's salvation*. I hope, when you are telling the story of what God did for *you*, that they will be led by the Spirit to desire the same mercy, themselves! But I will give you a piece of advice. Do not tell this story to your ungodly friends when they are all together, for they will laugh at you. Take them one by one, when you can get them alone, and begin to tell it to them, and they will hear you seriously. There was once a very pious lady who kept a lodging-house for young men. All the young men were very merry and giddy and she wanted to say something to them concerning religion. She introduced the subject and it was passed off immediately with a laugh. She thought within herself, "I have made a mistake." The next morning, after breakfast, when they were all leaving, she said to one of them, "sir, I should like to speak with you a moment or two," and taking him aside into another

room she talked with him. The next morning she took another and the next morning another and it pleased God to bless her simple statement—when it was given individually! But without doubt, if she had spoken to them all together, they would have backed each other up in laughing her to scorn. Reprove a man alone! A verse may hit him while a sermon flies right by him. You may be the means of bringing a man to Christ who has often heard the Word and only laughed at it, but who cannot resist a gentle admonition.

In one of the states of America there was an infidel who was a great despiser of God, a hater of the Sabbath and all religious institutions. What to do with him, the ministers did not know. They met together and prayed for him. But among the rest, one elder resolved to spend a long time in prayer for the man. After that, he got on horseback and rode down to the man's forge, for he was a blacksmith. He left his horse outside and said, "Neighbor, I am under very great concern about your soul's salvation. I tell you, I pray day and night for your soul's salvation." He left him and rode home on his horse. The man went inside to his house after a minute or two and said to one of his faithful friends, "Here's a new argument. Here's elder Bob been down here. He did not dispute and never said a word to me except this, 'I say, I am under great concern about your soul. I cannot bear you should be lost.' Oh, that fellow," he said, "I cannot answer him." And the tears began to roll down his cheeks. He went to his wife and said, "I can't make this out. I never cared about my soul but here's an elder that has no connection with me, but I have always laughed at him, and he has come five miles this morning, on horseback, just to tell me he is under concern about my salvation." After a little while he thought it was time he should be under concern about his salvation too! He went in, shut the door, began to pray, and the next day he was at the elder's house telling him that he too was under concern about his salvation and asking him to tell him what he must do to be saved. Oh, that the everlasting God might make use of some of those now present in the same way—that they might be induced to—

***"Tell to others round
What a dear Savior they have found!
To point to His redeeming blood,
And say, Behold the way to God!"***

III. I shall not detain you much longer, but there is a third point, upon which we must be very brief. HOW IS THIS STORY TO BE TOLD?

First, *tell it truthfully*. Do not tell more than you know. Do not tell John Bunyan's experience, when you ought to tell your own! Do not tell your mother you have felt what only Rutherford felt. Tell her no more than the truth. Tell your experience truthfully, for maybe one single fly in

the pot of ointment will spoil it and one statement you may make which is not true may ruin it all. Tell the story truthfully.

In the next place, *tell it very humbly*. I have said that before. Do not intrude yourselves upon those who are older and know more, but tell your story humbly. Not as a preacher, not *ex-cathedra* but as a friend and as a son.

Next, *tell it very earnestly*. Let them see you mean it. Do not talk about religion flippantly. You will do no good if you do. Do not make puns on texts. Do not quote Scripture by way of joke—if you do, you may talk till you are dumb—you will do no good if you in the least degree give them occasion to laugh by laughing at holy things yourself. Tell it very earnestly.

And then, *tell it very devoutly*. Do not try to tell your tale to man till you have told it, first, to God. When you are at home on Christmas Day let no one see your face till God has seen it. Be up in the morning. Wrestle with God, and if your friends are not converted, *wrestle with God for them*—and then you will find it easy work to *wrestle with them for God*. Seek, if you can, to get them one by one and tell them the story. Do not be afraid—only think of the good you may possibly do, by God’s grace. Remember, he that saves a soul from death has covered a multitude of sins and he shall have stars in his crown forever and ever. Seek to be under God—to be the means of leading your own beloved brothers and sisters to seek and to find the Lord Jesus Christ. And then one day, when you shall meet in Paradise, it will be a joy and blessedness to think that you are there and that your friends are there, too, whom God will have made you the instrument of saving. Let your reliance in the Holy Spirit be entire and honest. Trust not yourself, but fear not to trust Him. He can give you words. He can apply those words to *their* heart and so enable you to “minister grace to the hearers.”

To close up, by a short, and I think, a pleasant turning of the text, I will suggest another meaning to it. Soon, dear friends, very soon with some of us, the Master will say, “Go home to your friends.” You know where the home is. It is up above the stars—

**“Where our best friends, our kindred dwell,
Where God our Savior reigns.”**

Yonder gray-headed man has buried all his friends. He has said, “I shall go to them but they will not return to me.” Soon his Master will say, “You have had enough tarrying here in this vale of tears—go home to your friends!” Oh, happy hour! Oh, blessed moment when that shall be the word—“Go home to your friends!” And when we go home to our friends in Paradise, what shall we do? Why, first we will repair to that blessed seat where Jesus sits, take off our crown and cast it at His feet and crown Him Lord of All! And when we have done that, what shall be

our next employ? Why, we will tell the blessed ones in heaven what the Lord has done for us and how He has had compassion on us. And shall such tales be told in heaven? Shall that be the Christmas Carol of the angels? Yes, it shall be. It has been published there before—blush not to tell it yet again—for Jesus has told it before. “When He comes home, He calls together His friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost.” And you, poor sheep, when you shall be gathered in, will you not tell how your Shepherd sought you and how He found you? Will you not sit in the grassy meads of heaven and tell the story of your own redemption? Will you not talk with your brothers and your sisters and tell them how God loved you, and has brought you there? Perhaps, you say, “It will be a very short story.” Ah, it would be if you could write it now. A little book might be the whole of your biography. But up there when your memory shall be enlarged, when your passion shall be purified, and your understanding clear—you will find that what was but a tract on earth, will be a huge volume in heaven! You will tell a long story there of God’s sustaining, restraining, constraining grace. And I think that when you pause to let another tell his tale and then another and then another, you will, at last, when you have been in heaven a thousand years, break out and exclaim, “O saints, I have something else to say.” Again they will tell their tales, and again you will interrupt them with, “Oh, beloved, I have thought of another case of God’s delivering mercy.” And so you will go on, giving them themes for songs, finding them the material for the warp and woof of heavenly sonnets! “Go home,” He will soon say, “Go home to your friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.” Wait awhile. Tarry His leisure and you shall soon be gathered to the land of the hereafter to the home of the blessed—where endless felicity shall be your portion! God grant a blessing for His name’s sake. Amen.

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HEAVENLY WORSHIP

NO. 110

**A SERMON DELIVERED SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 28, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

“And I looked and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voices of harpers harping with their harps. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.”
Revelation 14:1-3.

THE scene of this marvelous and magnificent vision is laid upon Mount Zion by which we are to understand, not Mount Zion upon earth, but Mount Zion which is above, “Jerusalem, the mother of us all.” To the Hebrew mind, Mount Zion was a type of heaven and very justly so. Among all the mountains of the earth, none was to be found as famous as Zion. It was there that patriarch Abraham drew his knife to slay his son. It was there too in commemoration of that great triumph of faith, Solomon built a majestic temple, “beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth.” That Mount Zion was the center of all the devotions of the Jews—

*“Up to her courts, with joys unknown,
The sacred tribes repaired.”*

Between the wings of the cherubim, Jehovah dwelt. On the one altar, there, all the sacrifices were offered to high heaven. They loved Mount Zion and often did they sing, when they drew near to her, in their annual pilgrimages, “How amiable are Your tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts, my King and my God!” Zion is now desolate. She has been ravished by the enemy, she has been utterly destroyed—her veil has been torn asunder and the virgin daughter of Zion is now sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But nevertheless, to the Jewish mind it must always, in its ancient state, remain the best and sweetest type of heaven. John, therefore, when he saw this sight, might have said, “I looked and, lo, a Lamb stood in heaven and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the

elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.”

This morning I shall endeavor to show you, first of all, *the object of heavenly worship*—the Lamb in the midst of the throne. In the next place, we shall look at *the worshippers themselves*, and note their manner and their character. In the third place, we shall listen to *hear their song*, for we may almost hear it. It is like “the noise of many waters and like great thunder.” And then, we shall close by noting that it is a new song which they sing and by endeavoring to mention one or two reasons why it must necessarily be so.

I. In the first place, then, we wish to take a view of THE OBJECT OF HEAVENLY WORSHIP. The divine John was privileged to look within the gates of pearl. And on turning round to tell us what he saw—observe how he begins—he says not, “I saw streets of gold or walls of Jasper.” He says not, “I saw crowns, marked their luster and saw the wearers.” That he shall notice afterwards. But he begins by saying, “I looked and, lo, a Lamb!” This teaches us that the very first and chief object of attraction in the heavenly state is “the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world.” Nothing else attracted the apostle’s attention as much as the person of that Divine Being, who is the Lord God, our most blessed Redeemer—“I looked and, lo, a Lamb!” beloved, if we were allowed to look within the veil which parts us from the world of spirits, we should see, first of all, the person of our Lord Jesus. If now we could go where the immortal spirits “day without night circle the throne rejoicing,” we would see each of them with their faces turned in one direction. And if we would step up to one of the blessed spirits and ask, “O bright immortal, why are your eyes fixed; what is it that absorbs you and wraps you up in vision?” He, without deigning to give an answer, would simply point to the center of the sacred circle and lo, we would see a Lamb in the midst of the throne! They have not yet ceased to admire His beauty and marvel at His wonders and adore His person—

***“Amidst a thousand harps and songs,
Jesus, our God, exalted reigns.”***

He is the theme of song and the subject of observation of all the glorified spirits and of all the angels in paradise! “I looked and, lo, a Lamb!”

Christian, here is joy for you! You have looked and you have seen the Lamb! Through tearful eyes you have seen the Lamb taking away your sins! Rejoice, then! In a little while, when your eyes shall have been wiped of tears, you will see the same Lamb exalted on His throne. It is the joy of the heart to hold daily fellowship and communion with Jesus. You shall have the same joy in heaven. “There shall you see Him as He is and you shall be like He is.” You shall enjoy the constant vision of His presence and you shall dwell with Him forever! “I looked and, lo, a Lamb!” Why, that Lamb is heaven, itself, for as good Rutherford says,

“Heaven and Christ are the same things. To be with Christ is to be in heaven, and to be in heaven is to be with Christ.” And he very sweetly says in one of his letters, wrapped up in love to Christ—“Oh! My Lord Christ, if I could be in heaven without You, it would be a hell. And if I could be in hell and still have You, it would be a heaven to me, for You are all the heaven I need.” It is true, is it not, Christian? Does not your soul say so?—

**“Not all the harps above
Could make a heavenly place,
Should Christ His residence move,
Or but conceal His face.”**

All you need to make you blessed, supremely blessed, is “to be with Christ, which is far better.”

And now observe *the figure under which Christ is represented in heaven*. “I looked and, lo, a Lamb,” Now, you know Jesus, in Scripture, is often represented as a lion—He is so to His enemies—for He devours them and tears them to pieces. “Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.” But in heaven He is in the midst of His friends and therefore He—

**“Looks like a lamb that has been slain,
And wears His priesthood still.”**

Why should Christ in heaven choose to appear under the figure of a lamb and not in some other of His glorious characters? We reply because it was as a lamb that Jesus fought and conquered and, therefore, as a lamb He appears in heaven. I have read of certain military commanders, when they were conquerors, that on the anniversary of their victory they would never wear anything but the garment in which they fought. On that memorable day they say, “No, take away the robes. I will wear the garment which has been embroidered with the saber-cut and garnished with the shot that has riddled it. I will wear no other garb but that in which I fought and conquered.” It seems as if the same feeling possessed the breast of Christ. “As a Lamb,” He says, “I died and worsted hell. As a Lamb I have redeemed My people and, therefore, as a Lamb I will appear in paradise.”

But perhaps there is another reason. It is to encourage us to come to Him in prayer. Ah, believer, we need not be afraid to come to Christ, for He is a Lamb! To a Lion-Christ we need fear to come—but the Lamb-Christ? Oh, little children, were you ever afraid of lambs? Oh, children of the living God, should you ever fail to tell your griefs and sorrows into the breast of one who is a Lamb? Ah, let us come boldly to the throne of heavenly grace, seeing a Lamb sits upon it! One of the things which tend very much to spoil our prayer meetings is the fact that our brethren do not pray boldly. They would practice reverence, as truly they ought, but they should remember that the highest reverence is consistent with true

familiarity! No man was more reverent than Luther. No man more fully carried out the passage, “He talked with his Maker as a man talks with his friend.” We may be as reverent as the angels and yet we may be as familiar as children in Christ Jesus! Now our friends, when they pray, very frequently say the same thing every time. They are Dissenters. They cannot bear the prayer book. They think that forms of prayer are bad, but they always use their own form of prayer notwithstanding, as much as if they were to say that the bishop’s form would not do but their own they must always use! But a form of prayer being wrong is as much wrong when I make it as when the bishop makes it! I am as much out of order in using what I compose continually and constantly, as I am when I am using one that has been composed for me! Perhaps far more so, as it is not likely to be one-half as good. If our friends, however, would lay aside the form into which they grow and break up the stereotyped plates with which they print their prayers so often, they might come boldly to the throne of God and need never fear to do so! For He whom they address is represented in heaven under the figure of a Lamb—to teach us to come close to Him and tell Him all our sins—believing that He will not disdain to hear them.

And you will further notice that *this Lamb is said to stand*. Standing is the posture of triumph. The Father said to Christ, “Sit You on My throne, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” It is done! They *are* His footstool, and here He is said to stand erect, like a victor over all His enemies! Many a time the Savior knelt in prayer. Once He hung upon the cross. But when the great scene of our text shall be fully worked out, He shall stand erect, as more than conqueror, through His own majestic might! “I looked and, lo, a Lamb *stood* on the Mount Zion.” Oh, if we could rend the veil—if now we were privileged to see within it—there is no sight would so enthrall us as the simple sight of the Lamb in the midst of the throne! My dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, would it not be all the sight you would ever wish to see if you could once behold Him whom your soul loves? Would it not be a heaven to you if it were carried out in your experience—“My eyes shall see Him and not another”? Would you need anything else to make you happy but continually to see Him? Can you not say with the poet—

**“Millions of years my wondering eyes
Shall over my Savior’s beauty rove,
And endless ages I’ll adore
The wonders of His love”?**

And if a single glimpse of Him on earth affords you profound delight, it must be, indeed, a very sea of bliss and an abyss of paradise—without a bottom or a shore—to see Him as He is—to be lost in His splendors, as the stars are lost in the sunlight and to hold fellowship with Him, as did

John the beloved, when he leaned his head upon His bosom! And this shall be your lot, to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne!

II. The second point is, THE WORSHIPPERS, WHO ARE THEY? Turn to the text and you will note, first of all, *their numbers*—"I looked and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand." This is a certain number representing an *uncertain*—I mean uncertain to *us*, though not uncertain to God! It is a vast number, representing that "multitude which no man can number," who shall stand before the throne of God. Now here is something not very pleasant to my friend, Bigot, yonder. Note the number of those who are to be saved. They are said to be a great number, even a "hundred forty and four thousand," which is but a unit emblematic of the vast innumerable multitude who are to be gathered home. Why, my friend, there are not as many as that belonging to your church. You believe that none will be saved but those who hear your minister and believe your creed. I do not think you could find one hundred and forty-four thousand anywhere! You will have to enlarge your heart. I think you must take in a few more and not be so inclined to shut out the Lord's people because you cannot agree with them! I abhor from my heart that continual whining of some men about their own little church as the "remnant"—the "few that are to be saved." They are always dwelling upon straight gates and narrow ways and upon what they conceive to be a truth of God—that but few shall enter heaven. Why, my friends, I believe there will be more in heaven than in hell! If you ask me why I think so, I answer, because Christ, in everything, is to "have the pre-eminence." I cannot conceive how He could have the pre-eminence if there are to be more in the dominions of Satan than in paradise! Moreover, it is said there is to be a multitude that no man can number in heaven. I have never read that there is to be a multitude that no man can number in hell. But I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them! And then there are the just and the redeemed of all nations and kindreds up till now. And there are better times coming, when the religion of Christ shall be universal. When He shall reign from pole to pole with illimitable sway! When kingdoms shall bow before Him and nations born in a day. And in the thousand years of the great millennial state there will be enough saved to make up all the deficiencies of the thousands of years that have gone before! Christ shall have the pre-eminence at last! His train shall be far larger than that which shall attend the chariots of the grim monarch of hell. Christ shall be Master everywhere and His praise sounded in every land! One hundred and forty-four thousand were observed—the types and representatives of a far larger number who are ultimately to be saved.

But notice, while the number is very large, *how very certain it is*. By turning over the leaves of your Bible to a previous chapter of this book, you will see that at the 4th verse it is written that one hundred and forty-four thousand were *sealed*. And now we find there are one hundred and forty-four thousand *saved*. Not 143,999 or 144,001, but exactly the number that are sealed! Now my friends may not like what I am going to say, but if they do not like it, their quarrel is with God's Bible, not with me—there will be just as many in heaven as are sealed by God—just as many as Christ purchased with His blood! All of them and no more and no less! There will be just as many there as were quickened to life by the Holy Spirit and were, “born-again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God.” “Ah,” some say, “there is that abominable doctrine of election!” Exactly so, if it is abominable! But you will never be able to cut it out of the Bible. You may hate it and gnash and grind your teeth against it, but, remember, we can trace the pedigree of this doctrine, even apart from Scripture, to the time of the apostles. Church of England ministers and members—you have no right to differ from me on the doctrine of election—if you are what you profess by your own Articles! You who love the old Puritans, you have no right to quarrel with me, for where will you find a Puritan who was not a strong Calvinist? You who love the fathers, you cannot differ from me! What say you of Augustine? Was he not, in his day, called a great and mighty teacher of divine grace? And I even turn to Roman Catholics and, with all the errors of their system, I remind them that even in their body have been found those who have held that doctrine and, though long persecuted for it, have never been expelled from the church! I refer to the Jansenists, but, above all, I challenge every man who reads his Bible to say that that doctrine is not there! What says the 9th chapter of Romans? “The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to *election* might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls. It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger.” And then it goes on to say to the carping objector—“No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?” But enough on this subject.

One hundred and forty-four thousand, we say, is a certain number made to represent the certainty of the salvation of all God's elect people. Now, some say that this doctrine has a tendency to discourage men from coming to Christ. Well, you say so, but I have never seen it and, blessed be God, I have never proved it so! I have preached this doctrine ever since I began to preach and I can say this—you shall not (and I am now become a fool in glorying)—you shall not find among those who have not

preached the doctrine, one who has been the instrument of turning more harlots, more drunks and more sinners of every class, from the error of their ways, than I have by the simple preaching of the doctrine of free grace! And, while this has been so, I hold that no argument can be brought to prove that it has a tendency to discourage sinners, or bolster them up in sin. We hold, as the Bible says, that all the elect and those, only, shall be saved, but we hold that *all* who *repent* are elect, that *all* who *believe* are elect and that *all* who *go to Christ* are elect! So that if any of you have in your heart a desire after heaven and after Christ—if you carry out that desire in sincere and earnest prayer and are born-again—you may as certainly conclude your election as you can conclude that you are alive! You must have been chosen of God before the foundation of the world, or you would never have done any of these things, seeing they are the fruits of election.

But why should it keep anyone from going to Christ? “Because,” says one, “if I go to Christ I may not be elect.” No, sir, if you go, you prove that you *are* elect! “But,” says another, “I am afraid to go, in case I should not be elect.” Say as an old woman once said, “If there were only three persons elected, I would try to be one of them and since He said, “He that believes shall be saved,” I would challenge God on His promise and try if He would break it.” No, come to Christ! And if you do so, beyond a doubt you are God’s elect from the foundation of the world and, therefore, this grace has been given to you! And why should it discourage you? Suppose there are a number of sick folk here and a large hospital has been built. There is put up over the door, “All persons who come shall be taken in.” At the same time, it is known that there is a person inside the hospital who is so wise that he knows all who will come and has written down the names of all who will come in a book, so that, when they come, those who open the doors will only say, “How marvelously wise our Master was to know the names of those who would come!” Is there anything dispiriting in that? You would go and you would have all the more confidence in that man’s wisdom because he was able to know, before they came, who would come! “Ah, but,” you say, “it was ordained that some should come.” Well, to give you another illustration. Suppose there is a rule that there always must be a thousand persons, or a very large number in the hospital. You say, “When I go, perhaps they will take me in and perhaps they will not.” “But,” says someone, “there is a rule that there *must* be a thousand in—somehow or other they must make up that number of beds and have that number of patients in the hospital.” You say, “Then why should not I be among the thousand? And have not I the encouragement that whoever goes shall not be cast out? And have I not, again, the encouragement that if they will not go, they must be fetched in somehow or other? For the number must be made up—so it is determined and so it is

decreed.” You would therefore have a double encouragement, instead of half a one, and you would go with confidence and say, “They must take me in because they say they will take all in that come. And on the other hand, they must take me in because they must have a certain number—that number is not made up and why should not I be one?” Oh, never doubt about election! Believe in Christ and then rejoice in election! Do not fret about it till you have believed in Christ!

“I looked and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand.” And who were these people, “having His Father’s name written on their foreheads?” Not *Bs* for, “Baptists.” Not *Ws* for, “Wesleyans.” Not *Es*, for “Established Church.” They had their *Father’s* name and nobody else’s! What a deal of fuss is made on earth about our distinctions! We think such a deal about belonging to this denomination and the other. Why, if you were to go to heaven’s gates and ask if they had any Baptists there, the angel would only look at you and not answer you. If you were to ask if they had any Wesleyans, or members of the Established Church, he would say, “Nothing of the sort.” But if you were to ask him whether they had any *Christians* there, “Yes,” he would say, “an abundance of them—they are all one now—all called by one name. The old brand has been obliterated, and now they have not the name of this man or the other—they have the name of God, even their Father, stamped on their brow.” Learn, then, dear friends, whatever the connection to which you belong, to be charitable to your brothers and sisters and kind to them, seeing that, after all, the name you now hold, here, will be forgotten in heaven and only your Father’s name will be known there!

One more remark and we will turn from the worshippers to listen to their song. It is said of all these worshippers that they learned the song before they went there. At the end of the third verse it is said, “No man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth.” brothers and sisters, we must begin heaven’s song here below or else we shall never sing it above! The choristers of heaven have all had rehearsals upon earth before they sing in that orchestra. You think that, die when you may, you will go to heaven without being prepared? No, sir, heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people and unless you are “made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” you can never stand there among them! If you were in heaven without a new heart and a right spirit, you would be glad enough to get out of it, for heaven, unless a man is heavenly, would be worse than hell! A man who is unrenewed and unregenerate going to heaven would be miserable. There would be a song—he could not join in it. There would be a constant hallelujah—but he would not know a note. And besides, he would be in the presence of the Almighty, even in

the presence of the God he hates and how could he be happy there? No, sirs. You must learn the song of paradise here, or else you can never sing it! You must learn to sing—

**“Jesus, I love Your charming name,
‘Tis music to my ears.”**

You must learn to feel that “sweeter sounds than music knows, mingle in your Savior’s name,” or else you can never chant the hallelujahs of the blessed before the throne of the great “I AM.” Remember that thought, whatever else you forget! Treasure it up in your memory and ask grace of God that you may here be taught to sing the heavenly song, that afterwards in the land of the hereafter, in the home of the beatified, you may continually chant the high praises of Him that loved you!

III. And now, we come to the third and most interesting point, namely, THE LISTENING TO THEIR SONG. “I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder. And I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps” singing—how loud and yet how sweet!

First, then, singing *how loud!* It is said to be “like the voice of many waters.” Have you ever heard the sea roar and the fullness thereof? Have you ever walked by the seaside when the waves were singing and when every little pebble stone did turn chorister to make up music to the Lord God of hosts? And have you ever in time of storm, beheld the sea, with its hundred hands, clapping them in gladsome adoration of the Most High? Have you ever heard the sea roar out its praise, when the winds were holding carnival—perhaps singing the dirge of mariners, wrecked far out on the stormy deep but far more likely exalting God with their hoarse voice and praising Him who makes a thousand fleets sweep over them in safety and writes His furrows on their own youthful brow? Have you ever heard the rumbling and booming of the ocean on the shore when it has been lashed into fury and has been driven upon the cliffs? If you have, you have a faint idea of the melody of heaven. It was “as the voice of many waters.” But do not suppose that it is the whole of the idea! It is not the voice of *one* ocean but the voice of *many* that is needed to give you an idea of the melodies of heaven! You are to suppose ocean piled upon ocean, sea upon sea—the Pacific piled upon the Atlantic, the Arctic upon that, the Antarctic still higher and so ocean upon ocean, all lashed to fury and all sounding with a mighty voice the praise of God. Such is the singing of heaven! Or if the illustration fails to strike, take another. We have mentioned here two or three times the mighty falls of Niagara. They can be heard at a tremendous distance, so awful is their sound. Now, suppose waterfalls dashing upon waterfalls, cataracts upon cataracts, Niagara upon Niagara, each of them sounding forth their mighty voices—and you have got some idea of the singing of paradise. “I heard a voice like the voice of many waters.” Can you not hear it? Ah, if

our ears were opened, we might almost catch the song. I have thought, sometimes, that the voice of the Aeolian harp, when it has swollen out grandly, was almost like an echo of the songs of those who sing before the throne. On the summer eve when the wind has come in gentle zephyrs through the forest, you might almost think it was the floating of some stray notes that had lost their way among the harps of heaven and come down to us, to give us some faint foretaste of that song which hymns out in mighty peals before the throne of the Most High!

But why so loud? The answer is because there are so many there to sing! Nothing is more grand than the singing of multitudes. Many have been the persons who have told me that they could but weep when they heard you sing in this assembly, so mighty seemed the sound when all the people sang—

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

And, indeed, there is something very grand in the singing of multitudes. I remember hearing 12,000 sing on one occasion in the open air. Some of our friends were then present when we concluded our service with that glorious hallelujah. Have you ever forgotten it? It was, indeed, a mighty sound! It seemed to make heaven, itself, ring again! Think, then, what must be the voice of those who stand on the boundless plains of heaven and, with all their might, shout, “Glory and honor and power and dominion unto Him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever!”

One reason, however, why the song is so loud is a very simple one, namely, because all those who are there think themselves bound to sing the loudest of all. You know our favorite hymn—

***“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace.”***

And every saint will join that sonnet and each one lift up his heart to God! Then how mighty must be the strain of praise that will rise up to the throne of the glorious God, our Father!

But note next, while it was a loud voice, how *sweet* it was. Noise is not music. There may be “a voice like many waters” and yet no music. It was sweet as well as loud, for John says, “I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.” Perhaps the sweetest of all instruments is the harp. There are others which give forth sounds more grand and noble, but the harp is the sweetest of all instruments. I have sometimes sat to hear a skillful harpist till I could say, “I could sit and hear myself away,” while with skillful fingers she touched the chords gently and brought forth strains of melody which flowed like liquid silver, or like sounding honey into one’s soul. Sweet, sweet beyond sweetness! Words can scarcely tell how sweet the melody. Such is the music of heaven! No jarring notes there. No discord but all one glorious harmonious song. You will not be there, formalist, to spoil the tune! Nor you, hypocrite, to mar the

melody! There will be all those there whose hearts are right with God, and therefore the strain will be one great harmonious whole, without a discord! Truly do we sing—

***“No groans to mingle with the songs
That warble from immortal tongues.”***

And there will be no discord of any other sort to spoil the melody of those before the throne. Oh, my beloved hearers, that we might all be there! Lift us up, you cherubs! Stretch your wings and bear us up where the sonnets fill the air! But if you must not, let us wait our time—

***“A few more rolling suns at most,
Will land us on fair Canaan’s coast,”***

and then we shall help to make the song, which now we can scarcely conceive, but which yet we desire to join!

IV. We now close with a remark upon the last point—WHY IS THE SONG SAID TO BE A NEW SONG? But one remark here. It will be a new song because the saints were never in such a position as they will be when they sing this new song. They are now in heaven, but the scene of our text is something more than heaven. It refers to the time when the entire chosen race shall meet around the throne, when the last battle shall have been fought and the last warrior shall have gained his crown. It is not *now* that they are thus singing, but it is in the glorious time to come, when all the hundred and forty and four thousand—or rather, the number typified by that number—will be all safely housed and all secure! I can conceive the period. Time was—eternity now reigns! The voice of God exclaims, “Are my beloved all safe?” The angel flies through paradise and returns with this message, “Yes, they are.” “Is *Fearful* safe? Is *Feeble-Mind* safe? Is *Ready-to-Halt* safe? Is *Despondency* safe?” “Yes, O King, they are,” he says. “Shut the gates,” says the Almighty, “they have been open night and day, shut them now.” THEN when all of them shall be there, *then* will be the time when the shout shall be louder than many waters and the song shall begin which will never end!

There is a story told in the history of brave Oliver Cromwell which I use here to illustrate this new song. Cromwell and his Ironsides, before they went to battle, bowed the knee in prayer and asked for God’s help. Then, with their Bibles on their breasts, and their swords in their hands—a strange and unjustifiable mixture but which their ignorance must excuse—they cried, “The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” And rushing to battle they sang—

***“O Lord our God, arise and
Your enemies scattered be,
And let all those that do You hate
Before Your presence flee.”***

They had to fight up hill for a long time but at last the enemy fled. The Ironsides were about to pursue them and win the booty, when the stern

harsh voice of Cromwell was heard—"Halt! Halt! Now the victory is won, before you rush to the spoil, return thanks to God." And they sang some such song as this—"Sing unto the Lord, for He has gotten us the victory! Sing unto the Lord." It was said to have been one of the most majestic sights in that strange, yet good man's history. (I say that word without blushing, for good he was). For a time the hills seemed to leap, while the vast multitude, turning from the slain, still stained with blood, lifted up their hearts to God. We say again it was a strange sight, yet a glad one. But how great shall be that sight when Christ shall be seen as conqueror and when all His warriors, fighting side by side with Him, shall see the dragon beaten in pieces beneath their feet? Lo, their enemies are fled. They were driven like thin clouds before a Biscay gale. They are all gone, death is vanquished, Satan is cast into the lake of fire and here stands the King, Himself, crowned with many crowns—the victor of the victors! And in the moment of exaltation, the Redeemer will say, "Come let us sing unto the Lord." And then, louder than the shout of many waters, they shall sing, "Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigns." And that will be the full carrying out of the great scene! My feeble words cannot depict it. I send you away with this simple question, "Shall *you* be there to see the conqueror crowned?" Have *you* "a good hope through divine grace" that you shall? If so, be glad. If not, go to your houses, fall on your knees and pray to God to save you from that terrible place which must certainly be your portion, instead of that great heaven of which I preach, unless you turn to God with full purpose of heart.

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A MIGHTY SAVIOR

NO. 111

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 4, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Mighty to save.”
Isaiah 63:1.***

THIS, of course, refers to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ who is described as “coming from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah.” And who, when questioned who He is, replies, “I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” It will be well, then, at the commencement of our discourse, to make one or two remarks concerning the mysteriously complex person of the man and God whom we call our Redeemer—Jesus Christ our Savior. It is one of the mysteries of the Christian religion that we are taught to believe that Christ is God and yet a man. According to Scripture, we hold that He is “very *God*,” equal and co-eternal with the Father, possessing, as His Father does, all divine attributes in an infinite degree. He participated with His Father in all the acts of His divine might. He was concerned in the decree of election, in the fashioning of the covenant, in the creation of the angels, in the making of the world when it was wheeled from nothing into space and in the ordering of this fair frame of nature. Before any of these acts, the divine Redeemer was the eternal Son of God. “From everlasting to everlasting He is God.” Nor did He cease to be God when He became man. He was equally “God over all, blessed forever more,” when He was “the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief,” as before His incarnation. We have abundant proof of that in the constant affirmations of Scripture and, indeed, also in the miracles which He worked. The raising of the dead, the treading of the billows of the ocean, the hushing of the winds and the rending of the rocks—all those marvelous acts of His—which we have not time here to mention, were strong and potent proofs that He is God! He is most truly God, even when He condescended to be man. And Scripture most certainly teaches us that He is God, now, that He shares the throne of His Father—that He sits “high above all principalities and powers and every name that is named”—and is the true and proper object of the veneration, the worship and the homage of all worlds.

We are equally taught to believe that He is *man*. Scripture informs us that, on a day appointed, He came from heaven and did become man as well as God, taking upon Himself the nature of a baby in the manger of Bethlehem. From that baby, we are told He did grow to the stature of

manhood, and became “bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,” in everything except our sin. His sufferings, His hunger—above all His death and burial—are strong proofs that He was man, most truly man, and yet it is demanded of us by the Christian religion to believe that while He was man, He was most truly God. We are taught that He was a “child born, a son given,” and at the same time, the “Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father.” Whoever would have a clear and right view of Jesus must not mingle His natures. We must not consider Him as a God diluted into deified manhood, or as a mere man officially exalted to the Godhead, but as being two distinct natures in one person. Not God melted into man, nor man made into God but man and God taken into union together. And therefore we trust in Him as the Mediator, Son of God and Son of Man. This is the person who is our Savior. It is this glorious yet mysterious being, of whom the text speaks, when it says, He is mighty—“mighty to save.”

That He is mighty, we need not inform you, for as readers of the Scriptures you all believe in the might and majesty of the incarnate Son of God. You believe Him to be the Regent of providence, the King of death, the Conqueror of hell, the Lord of angels, the Master of storms, and the God of battles, and therefore you need no proof that He is mighty. The subject of this morning is one part of His mightiness—He is “mighty to save.” May God the Holy Spirit help us in briefly entering upon this subject, and make use of it to the salvation of our souls!

First, we shall consider that *what is meant by the words, “to save”*; secondly, *how we prove the fact that He is “mighty to save”*; thirdly, *the reason why He is “mighty to save”*; and then, fourthly, *the inferences which are to be deduced from the doctrine that Jesus Christ is “mighty to save.”*

I. First, then, WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE WORDS, “TO SAVE”?

Commonly, most men, when they read these words, consider them to mean salvation from hell. They are partially correct, but the notion is highly defective. It is true Christ does save men from the penalty of their guilt. He does take those to heaven who deserve the eternal wrath and displeasure of the Most High. It is true that He does blot out “iniquity, transgression and sin” and that the iniquities of the remnant of His people are passed over for the sake of His blood and atonement. But that is not the whole meaning of the words, “to save.” This deficient explanation lies at the root of mistakes which many theologians have made and by which they have surrounded their system of divinity with mist. They have said that to save is to pluck men as brands from the burning—to save them from destruction—*if they repent*. Now, it means vast, I had almost said, infinitely more than this! “To save” means something more than

just delivering penitents from going down to hell. By the words, “to save,” I understand the whole of the great work of salvation, from the first holy *desire*, the first spiritual *conviction*, onward to complete *sanctification*! All this is done of God through Jesus Christ. Christ is not only mighty to save those who repent, but He is able to *make men repent*! He is engaged not merely to carry those to heaven who believe, but He is mighty to give men new hearts and to work faith in them. He is mighty not merely to give heaven to one who wishes for it, but He is mighty to make the man who hates holiness, love it, to constrain the despiser of His name to bend his knee before Him and to make the most abandoned reprobate turn from the error of his ways!

By the words, “to save,” I do not understand how some men define them! They tell us that Christ came into the world to put all men into a “salvable state”—to make the salvation of all men possible by their own exertions. I believe that Christ came for no such thing—that He came into the world not to put men into a *salvable* state but into a *saved* state! Not to put them where they could save *themselves*, but to do the work in them and for them, from the first even to the last! If I believe that Christ came only to put you, my hearers, and myself into a state where we might save ourselves, I should give up preaching henceforth and forever, for I know a little of the wickedness of men’s hearts because I know something of my own—I know how much men naturally hate the religion of Christ! I would despair of any success in preaching a gospel which effects depended upon the voluntary acceptance of it by unrenewed and unregenerate men! If I did not believe that there was a might going forth with the word of Jesus which makes men willing in the day of His power—which turns them from the error of their ways by the mighty, overwhelming compelling force of a divine and mysterious influence—I would cease to glory in the cross of Christ! Christ, we repeat, is mighty not merely to put men into a salvable condition, but absolutely and entirely mighty to *save* them! This fact I regard as one of the grandest proofs of the divine character of the Bible revelation. I have many a time had doubts and fears, as most of you have had—and where is the strong believer who has not sometimes wavered? I have said within myself, “Is this religion true, which, day after day I incessantly preach to the people? Is it the correct one? Is it true that this religion has an influence upon mankind?” And I will tell you how I have reassured myself. I have looked upon the hundreds, no, upon the thousands whom I have around me who were once the vilest of the vile—drunks, swearers and such like—and I now see them “clothed and in their right mind,” walking in holiness and in the fear of God. And I have said within myself, “This must be the truth of God, then, because I see its marvelous effects.” It is true because it is efficient for purposes which error never could accomplish! It exerts an in-

fluence among the lowest order of mortals and over the most abominable of our race. It is a power, an irresistible agent of good—who then shall deny it? I take it that the highest proof of Christ's power is not that He *offers* salvation, not that He bids you take it if you will, but that when you reject it, when you hate it, when you despise it, He has a power whereby He can *change your mind*, make you think differently from your former thoughts and turn you from the error of your ways! This I conceive to be the meaning of the text—"mighty to save."

But it is not all the meaning! Our Lord is not only mighty to make men repent, to quicken the dead in sin, to turn them from their follies and their iniquities—He is exalted to do more than that! He is mighty to *keep them* Christians after He has made them so and mighty to preserve them in His fear and love until He consummates their spiritual existence in heaven! Christ's might does not lie in making a believer and then leaving him to shift for himself afterwards. No, He who begins the good work carries it on! He who imparts the first germ of life which quickens the dead soul, gives afterwards the life which prolongs the divine existence and bestows that mighty power which at last bursts asunder every bond of sin and lands the soul perfected in heaven! We hold and teach and we believe upon Scriptural authority that all men unto whom Christ has given repentance must infallibly hold in their way! We believe that God never begins a good work in a man without finishing it. We believe that He never makes a man truly alive to spiritual things without carrying on that work in his soul even to the end by giving him a place among the choirs of the sanctified. We do not think that Christ's power dwells in merely bringing me one day into grace and then telling me to keep myself there, but in so putting me into a gracious state and giving me such an inward life and such a power within myself that I can no more turn back than the very sun in the heavens can stay itself in its course, or cease to shine! Beloved, we regard this as signified by the term, "mighty to save." This is commonly called Calvinistic doctrine—it is none other than Christian doctrine—the doctrine of the Holy Bible. In spite of the fact that it is now called Calvinism, it could not be so called in Augustine's days. And yet in Augustine's works you find the very same things! And it is not to be called Augustinism, for it is to be found in the writings of the apostle Paul! And yet it was not called Paulism simply for this reason—it is the expansion, the fullness of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! To repeat what we have said before—we hold and boldly teach that Jesus Christ is not merely able to save men who put themselves in His way and who are willing to be saved, but that He is able to make men willing—that He is able to make the drunk renounce his drunkenness and come to Him—that he is able to make the despiser bend his knees, and make hard

hearts melt before His love. Now, it is ours to show that He is able to do so.

II. HOW CAN WE PROVE THAT CHRIST IS “MIGHTY TO SAVE”?

We will give you the strongest argument first. And we shall need but one. The argument is that He has done it! We need no other. It would be superfluous to add another. He has saved men! He has saved them in the full extent and meaning of the word which we have endeavored to explain. But in order to set this truth in a clear light, we will suppose the worst of cases. It is very easy to imagine, some say, that when Christ's gospel is preached to some here who are amiable and lovely and have always been trained up in the fear of God, they will receive the gospel in the love of it. Very well, then, we will not take such a case. You see this South Sea Islander? He has just been eating a diabolical meal of human flesh. He is a cannibal! On his belt are slung the scalps of men whom he has murdered, and in whose blood he glories. If you land on the coast, he will eat you, too, unless you mind what you are doing! That man bows himself before a block of wood. He is a poor ignorant debased creature—very little removed from the brute animal. Now, has Christ's gospel power to tame that man, to take the scalps from his belt, to make him give up his bloody practices, renounce his gods, and become a civilized and Christian? You know, my dear friends, you talk about the power of education in England. There may be a great deal in it—education may do very much for some who are here—not in a spiritual, but in a natural way. But what would education do with this savage? Go and try! Send the best schoolmaster in England over to him—he will eat him before the day is up! That will be all the good of it. But if the missionary goes with Christ's gospel, what will become of him? Why, in multitudes of cases, he has been the pioneer of civilization and, under the providence of God, has escaped a cruel death. He goes with love in his hands and in his eyes. He speaks to the savage. And mark you, we are now telling facts, not dreams! The savage drops his tomahawk. He says, “It is marvelous. The things that this man tells me are wonderful. I will sit down and listen.” He listens and the tears roll down his cheeks. A feeling of humanity which never burned within his soul, before, is kindled in him. He says, “I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” and soon he is clothed and in his right mind and becomes in every respect a man—such a man as we could desire all men to be! Now we say that this is proof that Christ's gospel does not come to the mind that is prepared for it, but *prepares the mind for itself*. Christ does not merely put the seed into the ground that has been prepared beforehand, but plows the ground, too—yes, and harrows it and does the whole of the work! He is able to do all this. Ask our missionaries who are in Africa in the midst of the greatest barbarians in the world—ask them whether Christ's gospel is able to save! They will point to the

kraal of the Afrikaan and then they will point to the houses of the Kuraman and they will say, "What has made this difference but the word of the gospel of Christ Jesus?" Yes, dear brothers and sisters, we have had proofs enough in heathen countries. And we need say no more but merely to add this—we have had proofs enough at home! There are some who preach a gospel which is very well fitted to train man in morals, but utterly unfit to save him. They preach a gospel which does well enough to keep men sober when they have become drunkards. It is a good thing enough to supply them with a kind of life when they have it already—but not to quicken the dead and save the soul—and it can give up to despair the very characters whom Christ's gospel was most of all intended to affect. I could tell you of some who have plunged head-first into the blackest gulfs of sin which would horrify you and me, if we would allow them to recount their guilt. I could tell you how they have come into God's house with their teeth set against the minister—determined that say what he would, they might listen but it would only be to scoff! They stayed a moment. Some word arrested their attention. They thought within themselves, "I will hear that sentence." It was some pointed, terse saying that entered into their souls. They knew not how it was, but they were spell-bound and stood to listen a little longer. And, by-and-by, unconsciously to themselves, the tears began to fall and when they went away they had a strange, mysterious feeling about them that led them to their chambers. Down they fell on their knees! The story of their life was all told before God. He gave them peace through the blood of the Lamb and they went to God's house, many of them, to say, "Come and hear what God has done for my soul," and to—

"Tell to sinners round

What a dear Savior they had found."

Remember the case of John Newton, the great and mighty preacher—an instance of the power of God to change the heart, as well as to give peace when the heart is changed. Ah, dear hearers, I often think within myself, "This is the greatest proof of the Savior's power." Let another doctrine be preached—will it do the same? If it will, why not let every man gather a crowd round him and preach it? Will it really do it? If it will, then the blood of men's souls must rest upon the man who does not boldly proclaim it! If he believes his gospel saves souls, how does he account for it that he stands in his pulpit from the first of January till the last of December, and never hears of a harlot made honest, nor of a drunk reclaimed? Why? For this reason—that it is a poor dilution of Christianity! It is something like it, but it is not the bold, broad Christianity of the Bible! It is not the full gospel of the blessed God, for *that* has power to save! But if they do believe that theirs is the gospel, let them preach it, and let them strive with all their might to win souls from sin.

We say again that we have proof positive in cases even here before us, that Christ is mighty to save even the worst of men and women—to turn them from follies in which they have too long indulged! And we believe that the same gospel preached elsewhere would produce the same results.

The best proof you can ever have of God's being mighty to save, dear hearers, is that He saved *you*. Ah, my dear hearer, it would be a miracle if He would save the fellow that stands by your side. But it would be more a miracle if He would save you! What are you this morning? "I am an infidel," says one, "I hate and despise Christ's religion." But suppose, sir, there should be such a power in that religion that one day you should be brought to believe it? What would you say, then? Ah, I know you would be in love with that gospel forever, for you would say, "I, above all men, was the last to receive it. And yet here I am, I know not how, brought to love it." Oh, such a man, when compelled to believe, makes the most eloquent preacher in the world! "Ah, but," says another, "I have been a Sabbath-breaker upon principle. I despise the Sabbath! I utterly and entirely hate everything religious." Well, I can never prove religion to you to be true unless it would ever lay hold of you and make you a new man. Then you will say there is something in it. "We speak what we do know and testify that we have seen." When we have felt the change it works in ourselves, then we speak of facts and not of fancies, and we speak very boldly too! We say again, then, He is "mighty to save."

III. But now it is asked, "WHY IS CHRIST MIGHTY TO SAVE"? To this there are many answers.

First, if we understand the word, "save," in the popular acceptance of the word, which is not, after all, the full one, though a true one—if we understand salvation to mean the pardon of sin and salvation from hell—Christ is mighty to save *because of the infinite efficacy of His atoning blood*. Sinner! Black as you are with sin, Christ this morning is able to make you whiter than the driven snow! You ask why? I will tell you. He is able to forgive because He has been punished for your sin. If you know and feel yourself to be a sinner; if you have no hope or refuge before God but in Christ, then be it known that Christ is able to forgive you because He was once punished for the very sins which you have committed, and therefore He can freely remit because the punishment has been entirely paid by Himself! Whenever I get on this subject, I am tempted to tell a story. And though I have told it times enough in the hearing of many of you, others of you have never heard it and it is the simplest way I know of setting out the belief I have in the atonement of Christ. Once a poor Irishman came to me in my vestry; he announced himself something in this way—"Your Reverence, I'm come to ask you a question." "In the first place," said I, "I am not a 'reverend,' nor do I claim the title. And in the

next place, why don't you go and ask your priest the question?" Said he, "Well, Your rev—sir, I meant—I did go to him but he did not answer me exactly to my satisfaction. So I have come to ask you, and if you will answer this, you will set my mind at peace, for I am much disturbed about it." "What is the question?" I said. "Why this; you say, and others say too that God is able to forgive sin. Now, I can't see how He can be just, and yet forgive sin—for," said this poor man, "I have been so greatly guilty that if God Almighty does not punish me, He *ought*. I feel that He would not be just if He were to allow me to go without punishment. How, then, sir, can it be true that He can forgive and still remain the title of just?" "Well," I said, "it is through the blood and merits of Jesus Christ." "Ah" he said, "but then I do not understand what you mean by that. It is the kind of answer I got from the priest, but I wanted him to explain it to me more fully—how it was that the blood of Christ could make God just. You say it does, but I want to know *how*." "Well, then," said I, "I will tell you what I think to be the whole system of atonement—which I think is the sum and substance, the root, the marrow and the essence of all the gospel. This is the way Christ is able to forgive. Suppose," I said, "you had killed someone. You were a murderer. You were condemned to die, and you deserved it." "Faith," he said, "yes, I would deserve it." "Well, her Majesty is very desirous of saving your life, and yet at the same time universal justice demands that someone should die on account of the deed that is done. Now, how is she to manage?" He replied, "That is the question! I cannot see how she can be inflexibly just, and yet allow me to escape." "Well," I said, "suppose I should go to her and say, 'Here is this poor Irishman. He deserves to be hanged, your Majesty. I don't want to quarrel with the sentence because I think it just. But, if you please, I so love him that if you were to hang *me* instead of him, I would be very willing.' Now, suppose she should agree to it and hang me instead of you, what then? Would she be just in letting you go?" "Yes" he said, "I should think she would. Would she hang two for one thing? I should say not. I'd walk away, and there isn't a policeman that would touch me for it." "Ah," I said, "that is how Jesus saves! 'Father,' Jesus said, 'I love these poor sinners; let Me suffer instead of them!' 'Yes,' said God, 'You shall.' And on the cross Jesus died and suffered the punishment which all His elect people ought to have suffered. So that now all who believe on Him, thus proving themselves to be His chosen, may conclude that He was punished for them, and that therefore they can never be punished." "Well," he said, looking me in the face once more, "I understand what you mean. But how is it, if Christ died for all men, that notwithstanding, some men are punished again? For that is unjust." "Ah," I said, "I never told you that! I said to you that Jesus has died for all who believe on Him, and all who repent. He was punished for *their* sins so absolutely and so really

that none of them shall ever be punished again.” “Faith,” said the man, clapping his hands, “*that’s* the gospel! If it isn’t, then I don’t know anything, for no man could have made that up, it is so wonderful. Ah,” he said, as he went down the stairs, “I’m safe now, with all my sins about me, I’ll trust in the man that died for me, and so I shall be saved!” Dear hearer, Christ is mighty to save because God did not turn away the sword, but He sheathed it in His own Son’s heart! He did not remit the debt, for it was paid in drops of precious blood! And now the great receipt is nailed to the cross, and our sins with it so that we may go free if we are believers in Him! For this reason He is “mighty to save,” in the truest sense of the word.

But in the larger sense of the word, understanding it to mean all that I have said it does mean, He is “mighty to save.” How is it that Christ is able to make men repent, to make men believe and to make them turn to God? One answers, “Why by the eloquence of preachers.” God forbid we should ever say that! It is neither by might nor by power.” Others reply, “It is by the force of moral persuasion.” God forbid we should say, “yes,” to that! Moral persuasion has been tried long enough on man, and yet it has failed miserably! How does He do it? We answer, by something which some of you despise but which, nevertheless, is a fact. He does it by the omnipotent influence of His Divine Spirit. While men are hearing the word (in those whom God will save) the Holy Spirit works repentance. He changes the heart, and renews the soul. True, the preaching is the *instrument*, but the Holy Spirit is the great agent! It is certain that the truth of God is the means of saving, but it is the Holy Spirit applying the truth which saves souls. Ah, and with this power of the Holy Spirit we may go to the most debased and degraded of men, and we need not be afraid but that God can save them! If God should please, the Holy Spirit could at this moment make every one of you fall on your knees, confess your sins, and turn to God. He is an Almighty Spirit, able to do wonders! In the life of Whitefield we read that sometimes under one of his sermons, 2,000 persons would at once profess to be saved, and were really so, many of them. We ask why it was? At other times he preached just as powerfully, and not one soul was saved. Why? Because in the one case the Holy Spirit went with the Word, and in the other case it did not. All the heavenly result of preaching is owing to the Divine Spirit sent from above. I am nothing! My brothers in the ministry are all nothing! It is God who does everything! “Who is Paul? Who is Apollos, and who is Cephas but ministers by whom you believed, even as God gave to every man.” It must be, “Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord.” Go forth, poor minister! You have no power to preach with polished diction and elegant refinement; go and preach as you can! The Spirit can make your feeble words mightier than the most ravishing elo-

quence! Alas, alas, for oratory! Alas for eloquence! It has long enough been tried. We have had polished periods and finely turned sentences. But in what places have the people been saved by them? We have had grand and gaudy language. But where have hearts been renewed? But now, “by the foolishness of preaching,” by the simple utterance by a child, of God’s Word, He is pleased to save them who believe, and to save sinners from the error of their way! May God prove His Word again this morning!

IV. The fourth point is, WHAT ARE THE INFERENCES TO BE DERIVED FROM THE FACT THAT JESUS CHRIST IS MIGHTY TO SAVE?

Why, first, there is a fact for ministers to learn—that they should endeavor to preach in faith, nothing wavering. “O God,” cries the minister at times, when he is on his knees, “I am weak. I have preached to my hearers and have wept over them. I have groaned for them. But they will not turn to You. Their hearts are like the nether mill-stone. They will not weep for sin, nor will they love the Savior.” Then I think I see the angel standing at his elbow and whispering in his ear, “*You* are weak, but *He* is strong. You can do nothing, but *He* is ‘mighty to save.’” Think about this. It is not the *instrument* but the God! It is not the pen wherewith the author writes which is to have the praise for his wisdom in composing the volume—it is the brain that thinks it and the hand that moves the pen. So in salvation; it is not the minister, it is not the preacher—but the God who first designs the salvation and afterwards uses the preacher to work it out. Ah, poor disconsolate preacher, if you have had but little fruit of your ministry, still go on in faith, remembering it is written, “My word shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Go on! Be of good courage. God shall help you. He shall help you and that right early!

Again—here is another encouragement for praying men and women who are praying to God for their friends. Mother, you have been groaning for your son for many years. He is now grown up and has left your roof but your prayers have not been heard. So you think. He is as merry as ever. Not yet has he made your breast rejoice. Sometimes you think he will bring your gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. It was but yesterday you said, “I will give him up, I will never pray for him again.” Stop, mother, stop! By all that is holy and that is heavenly, stop! Utter not that resolution again! Begin once more! You have prayed over him. You did weep over his infant forehead when he lay in his cradle. You did teach him, when he came to years of understanding, and you have often warned him since. But all to no avail. Oh, give not up your prayers—remember—Christ is “mighty to save.” It may be that He waits to be gracious and He keeps you waiting that you may know more of His graciousness when the mercy comes! But pray on. I have heard of mothers

who have prayed for their children 20 years. Yes, and of some who have died without seeing them converted—and then their very death has been the means of saving their children by leading them to think! A father once had been a pious man for many years, yet never had he the happiness of seeing one of his sons converted. He had his children round his bed and he said to them when dying, “My sons, I could die in peace if I could but believe you would follow me to heaven. But this is the most sorrowful thing of all—not that I am dying—but that I am leaving you to meet you no more.” They looked at him, but they would not think on their ways. They went away. Their father was suddenly overtaken with great clouds and darkness of mind. Instead of dying peacefully and happily, he died in great misery of soul, but still trusting in Christ. He said when he died, “Oh that I had died a happy death, for that would have been a testimony to my sons. But now, O God, this darkness and these clouds have in some degree taken away my power to witness to the truth of Your religion.” Well, he died and was buried. The sons came to the funeral. The day after, one of them said to his brother, “Brother, I have been thinking. Father was always a pious man, and if his death was yet such a gloomy one, how gloomy must ours be, without God and without Christ?” “Ah,” said the other, “that thought struck me, too.” They went up to God’s house, heard God’s Word, they came home and bent their knees in prayer, and to their surprise they found that the rest of the family had done the same, and that the God who had never answered the father’s prayer in his life had answered it after his death! And by his death too, and by such a death as would appear to be most unlikely to have worked the conversion of any! Pray on, then, my sister. Pray on, my brother! God shall yet bring your sons and daughters to His love and fear. And you shall rejoice over them in heaven, if you never do on earth.

And finally, my dear hearers, there are many of you here this morning who have no love to God, no love to Christ. But you have a desire in your hearts to love Him. You are saying, “Oh, can He save *me*? Can such a wretch as I, be saved?” In the thick of the crowd there you are standing and you are now saying within yourself, “May I one day sing among the saints above? May I have all my sins blotted out by blood divine?” Yes, sinner, He is “mighty to save.” And this is comfort for you! Do you think yourself the worst of men? Does conscience smite you as with a mailed fist and does he say it is all over with you? You will be lost? Your repentance will be of no avail? Your prayers never will be heard? You are lost to all intents and purposes? My hearer, think not so; He is “mighty to save.” If you cannot pray, He can help you to do it. If you can not repent, He can give you repentance. If you feel it hard to believe, He can help you to believe, for He is exalted on high to give repentance as well as to give remission of sins. O poor sinner, trust in Jesus! Cast yourself on Him! Cry

and may God help you to do it now, the first Sabbath of the year. May He help you this very day to cast your soul on Jesus. And this will be one of the best years of all your life. “Turn you, turn you! Why will you die, O house of Israel?” Turn unto Jesus, you wearied souls. Come unto Him, for lo, He bids you come! “The Spirit and the bride say come. And let him who hears say come. And whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life,” and have Christ’s grace freely! It is preached to you and to all of you who are willing to receive it, it has already been given!

May God of His grace make you willing, and so save your souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

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THE WAR OF TRUTH

NO. 112

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 11, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men and go out,
fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of
the hill with the rod of God in my hands.”
Exodus 17:9.***

THE children of Israel were led out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. They were conducted into the vast howling wilderness where there were few, if any, permanent abodes of men. For some time they pursued their march in solitude, discovering wells and other traces of a nomadic population but not meeting with any to disturb their loneliness. But it appears that then, as now, there were wandering tribes who, like the Bedouin Arabs, wandered to and fro through that very country which the people of Israel were now treading with their feet. These people, excited by the hope of spoil, fell suddenly upon the rear of the children of Israel, smote the hindmost of them in a most cowardly manner, took their spoil and then swiftly retreated. Gathering strength and courage from this successful foray, they then dared to attack the whole host of Israel which at that time must have amounted to two or three millions souls who had been brought out of Egypt and fed by miracle in the wilderness. This time Israel was not to be surprised, for Moses had said unto Joshua—“Choose us out men and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.” Moses proposed leading with God in order that every blow struck with the sword might be made doubly powerful by the mighty assistance of God. We are told that a great victory was achieved. The Amalekites were put to the rout and because of their unprovoked attack upon the children of Israel, they were condemned to extermination, for we find it written thus—“Write this for a memorial in a book and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar and called the name of it Jehovah Nissi. For he said, Because the Lord has sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

Now, beloved, this scene of warfare is not recorded in Scripture as an interesting circumstance to amuse the lover of history—it is written for

our edification. For we remember the text which says—“Whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our profit.” There is some profit to be derived from this—and we believe a peculiar profit, too, since God was pleased to make this the first writing commanded by divine authority as a record for generations to come. We think that the journeys of the children of Israel furnish us with many emblems of the journey of God’s church through the world. And we believe that this fight with Amalek is a metaphor and an emblem of that constant and daily fight which all God’s people must carry on with sins without and sins within. This morning I shall more particularly confine myself to *sin without*. I shall speak of the great battle which at the present moment is being waged for God and for His truth against the enemies of the cross of Christ. I shall endeavor, first, to make a few remarks upon *the war itself*. Then to review *the authorized method of warfare*, which is twofold—hard blows and hard prayers. And then I shall finish by *stirring up God’s church* to great and earnest diligence in the warfare for God and for His truth.

I. First, then, we shall make some remarks upon THE GREAT WARFARE which we think is typified by the contest between the children of Israel and Amalek.

First of all, note that this crusade, this sacred, holy war of which I speak, is not with men but with Satan and with error. “We wrestle not with flesh and blood.” Christians are not at war with any man that walks the earth. We are at war with infidelity, but the persons of infidels we love and pray for. We are at warfare with any heresy, but we have no enmity against heretics. We are opposed to and cry war to the knife with everything that opposes God and His truth—but towards every man we would still endeavor to carry out the holy maxim, “Love your enemies, do good to them who hate you.” The Christian soldier has no gun and no sword, for he fights not with men. It is with “spiritual wickedness in high places” that he fights and with other principalities and powers than with those that sit on thrones and hold scepters in their hands. I have marked, however, that some Christians—and it is a feeling to which all of us are prone—are very apt to make Christ’s war a war of flesh and blood instead of a war with wrong and spiritual wickedness. Have you ever noticed in religious controversies how men will become bitter with each other? Have you noticed that they make personal remarks and abuse each other? What is that but forgetting what Christ’s war is? We are not fighting against men! We are fighting *for* men rather than *against* them. We are fighting for God and His truth against error and against sin—but not against men. Woe, woe, to the Christian who forgets this sacred canon of warfare! Touch not the persons of men but smite their sin with a

stout heart and with strong arm. Slay both the little ones and the great! Let nothing be spared that is against God and His truth—but we have no war with the persons of poor mistaken men! We hate Rome even as we abhor hell, yet for her votaries we always pray! Idolatry and infidelity we fiercely denounce, but the men who debase themselves by either of them are the objects not of wrath, but pity! We fight not against the men, but against the things which we consider in God's sight to be wrong! Let us always make that distinction; otherwise the conflict with Christ's church will be degraded into a mere battle of brute force, and garments rolled in blood, and so the world will again be an Aceldama—a field of blood. It is this mistake which has nailed martyrs to the stake and cast confessors into prison—because their opponents could not distinguish between the imaginary error and the man, while they spoke stoutly against the seeming error. In their ignorant bigotry, they felt that they must also persecute the man, which they need not and ought not to have done. I will never be afraid to speak my mind with all the Saxon words I can get together—I am not afraid of saying hard things against the devil and against what the devil teaches. But with every man in the wide world I am friends—nor is there one living with whom I am at enmity for a moment any more than with the babe that has just been brought into the world! We must hate error. We must abhor falsehood. But we must not hate men, for God's warfare is against SIN. May God help us to always make that distinction!

But now let us observe that the warfare which the Christian carries on may be said for his encouragement, to be a most *righteous* warfare. In every other conflict in which men have engaged, there have been two opinions. Some have said the war was right and some have said it was wrong. But in regard to the sacred war in which all believers have been engaged, there has been only one opinion among right-minded men. When the ancient priest stirred up the Crusaders to the fight, he made them shout *Deus vult—God wills it*. And we may far more truly say the same. A war against falsehood, a war against sin is God's war! It is a war which commends itself to every Christian, seeing he is quite certain that he has the seal of God's approval when he goes to wage war against God's enemies. Beloved, we have no doubt whatever, when we lift up our voices like a trumpet against sin, that our warfare is justified by the eternal laws of God's Justice. Would to God that every war had so just and true an excuse as the war which God wages with Amalek—with sin in the world!

Let us remember, again, that it is a war of the *greatest importance*. In other wars it is sometimes said—"Britons! Fight for your hearths and

your homes, for your wives and for your children—fight and repel the foe!” But in this war it is not merely for our hearths and for our homes, for our wives and for our children—it is for something more than this! It is not against them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But it is a fight for souls, for eternity—against those who would plunge man into eternal hell! It is a fight for God, for the deliverance of men’s souls from wrath to come. It is a war which ought, indeed, to be commenced—to be followed up and carried out in spirit by the whole army of God’s elect—seeing that no war can be more important! The instrumental salvation of men is above all things—the highest objective to which we can attain! And the routing of the foes of the truth of God is a victory beyond all things to be desired! Religion must be the foundation of every blessing which society can hope to enjoy. Little as men think it, religion has much to do with our liberty, our happiness and our comfort. England would not have been what it now is if it had not been for her religion. And in that hour when she shall forsake her God, her glory shall have fallen and “Ichabod” shall be written upon her banners!

In that day when the gospel shall be silenced, when our ministers shall cease to preach, when the Bible shall be chained. In that day—God forbid it should ever come to pass—in that day England may write herself among the dead, for she will have fallen since God will have forsaken her! In that day she will have cast off her allegiance to Him. Christians, in this fight for right you are fighting for your nation, for your liberties, your happiness and your peace! For unless religion—the religion of heaven—is maintained, these will most certainly be destroyed!

Let us reflect, in the next place, that we are fighting with insidious and very *powerful foes* in this great warfare for God and Christ. Let me again make the remark that while speaking of certain characters I am not speaking of the *men* but of their *errors*. At this time we have peculiar difficulties in the great contest for truth—peculiar because very few appreciate them. We have enemies of all classes and all of them far wider awake than we are. The infidel has his eyes wide open—he is spreading his doctrines everywhere. And while we think—good easy men, that surely our greatness is ripening—frost is nipping many of our fair shoots. Unless we awaken, God help us! In almost every place infidelity seems to have a great sway. Not the bold bragging infidelity of Tom Payne, but a more polite and moderate infidelity. Not that which slays religion with a bludgeon, but that which seeks to poison it with a small dose and goes its way and says it has not hurt public morals. Everywhere this is increasing. I fear that the great mass of our population are imbued with an

infidel spirit. Then we have more to fear than some of us suppose, from Rome. Not from Rome openly, from that we have little to fear. God has given to the people of England such a bold Protestant spirit that any open innovation from the Pope of Rome would be instantly repelled! But I mean the Romanism that has crept into the Church of England under the name of Puseyism. That has increased everywhere! They are beginning to light candles on the altar, which is only a prelude to those greater lights with which they would consume our Protestantism. Oh, that there were men who would unmask them! We have much to fear from them. But I would not care one whit for that if it were not for something which is even worse. We have to deal with a spirit—I know not what to call it—unless I call it a spirit of moderatism in the pulpits of Protestant churches! Men have begun to rub off the rough edges of the truth of God, to give up the doctrines of Luther and Zwingli and Calvin and to endeavor to accommodate them to polished tastes. You might go into a Roman Catholic chapel, nowadays, and hear as good a sermon from a Popish priest as you hear in many cases from a Protestant minister—because he does not touch disputed points, or bring out the angular parts of our Protestant religion! Mark, too—in the great majority of our books, what a dislike there is to sound doctrine! The writers seem to fancy that the truth of God is of no more value than error—that as for the doctrines we preach, it cannot matter what they are. They still hold that—

“He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

There is creeping into the pulpits of Baptists and every other denomination, a lethargy and coldness and with that a sort of nullification of all the truth of God! While they, for the most part, preach but little notable error, *the truth* itself is uttered in so minute a form, that no one detects it and in so ambiguous a style that no one is struck with it. So far as man can do it, God’s arrows are blunted and the edge of His sword is turned in the day of battle! Men do not hear the truth as they used to. The velvet mouth is succeeding to the velvet cushion, and the organ is the only thing in the building which gives forth a certain sound. From all such things, “Good Lord deliver us!” May heaven put an end to all this moderationism; we want and need out-and-out truth in these perilous days! We want and need a man to speak as God tells him and care for nobody’s opinions. Oh, if we had some of the old Scotch preachers! Those Scotch preachers made kings tremble. They were no men’s servants. They were very lords, wherever they went, because each of them said, “God has given me a message. My brow is like adamant against men. I will speak what God bids me.” Like Micah, (2 Chron 18:13) they said, “As the Lord my God lives, whatever my God says unto me, that will I speak.” Heroes

of the truth! Soldiers of Christ, awake! Even now there are enemies. Think not that the fight is over. The great warfare of truth waxes more hot and fierce than ever. Oh, soldiers of Christ! Take your swords from your scabbards! Stand up for God and for His truth lest a free grace gospel should be forgotten!

Let me just say, once more, concerning this war, that it is one that is to be of *perpetual duration*. Let us remember, my beloved that this war between right and wrong must be continued and never must cease until truth has the victory. If you suppose that our forefathers did enough for truth and for God and that you may be idle, you have made a great mistake! Until that day when the might with the right and the right with the might shall be, we must never sheathe our swords! Until that happy hour when Christ shall reign, when He shall be Master of all lands, when “swords shall be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks” and men shall not learn war any more—until that day the conflict is to be kept up! Let no man think we are in such a position that we have no need for watchfulness—terrible as the war has been before, it is as terrible now, though in another manner. We have not now to resist unto blood striving against sin, but we have need of as stern a power of resistance as ever was possessed by martyrs and confessors in days gone by. Brothers and sisters, we must awake! The army must be alerted. The soldiers of the Lord must be quickened to a consciousness of their position. Now! Now, we blow the trumpet! Rush to the fight, you slumbering soldiers! Up, up, up! Let your banners wave and let your swords be taken from your scabbards. It is a day of fight—a day of war and contention!

I cannot, however, conclude this section of my discourse without remarking that it is not merely error in religion with which we have to fight, but error in *practice*. Oh beloved, this world is still a wicked world. London is still an abominable city! We have a fine gloss everywhere—a fair exterior but, alas, within the hidden parts, sin is still dominant! This is the great city of pretense, the gaudy house of sham, the foul home of pollution! Our streets are lined with fair houses. But what have we behind them? What have we there, in the very vitals of our city? This city is a colossal culprit! It is a behemoth sinner and everywhere there are those who live in the vilest of vices and yet go unchecked and unreprieved. We live in a time when it is unfashionable to tell men of their sins and there are few who have the spirit to speak out plainly of men’s sins. When we consider the mass of female profligacy which number its votaries by tens of thousands, are we not driven to conclude that the same sin must be rife enough with *men*? And ah, that there should be need to utter it! Are not the men who ensnare and seduce the poor unfortunates, allowed to

enter society as respectable and moral? What is this but abominable hypocrisy? We are greater sinners in London than many suppose! Everything is painted over. But do you think that you can deceive God in this way? Sin is stalking through the land at a horrid pace. Iniquity still runs down our streets—covered up, it is true—not open sin, but still offensive alike to God and to good men. Oh, my brothers and sisters, the world is not yet good! It is filmed over, but all the while the loathsome disease lurks within! Up, again, I say, soldiers of Christ! The war against sin is not finished—it is scarcely begun!

II. But now, secondly, we have to notice, briefly, the APPOINTED MEANS OF WARFARE. When Amalek came out against Israel, God appointed two means of combating them. If He had chosen, He could have sent a wind and driven them away, or have cut off their hosts by the blast of the pestilence. But it did not so please Him, for He would put honor upon human effort and, therefore, He said to Joshua, “Choose out your men and go fight with Amalek.” It is true Joshua might, by God’s strength, have overcome the foe. But says God, “While I honor human effort, I will still make men see that God does all. Moses! Go up to yonder hill. Stand there in prayer. Hold up your rod and while the soldiers of Joshua rush into the fight, you shall plead and you shall be unitedly successful. Your prayer, O Moses, without the sword of Joshua, shall not prosper. And the sword of Joshua, without the rod of Moses, shall not be effectual.” The two ways of fighting sin are these—hard blows and hard prayers!

First, the church must employ hard blows and hard fighting against sin. It is of no use for you to shut yourselves up in your houses and pray to God to stop sin unless you go and do something yourselves. If you pray till you are dumb, you shall never have a blessing unless you exert yourselves. Let the farmer pray for a harvest—will he ever have it unless he plows the field and then sows his seed? Let the warrior pray for victory and let his soldiers stand peacefully to be shot at—will he gain a triumph? No, there must be an active exercise of the power *given by God* or else prayer without it will be of no avail! Let us, then, brothers and sisters, each in our spheres, deal hard blows at the enemy! This is a fight in which all can do something who are the Lord’s people. Those who halt upon their crutches can use them for weapons of war as well as the mighty men can wield their swords! We have each an allotted work to do if we are the Lord’s Elect. Let us take care that we do it. You are a tract distributor—go on with your work—do it earnestly. You are a Sunday school teacher—go on, do not stop that blessed work—do it as unto God and not as unto man! You are a preacher—preach as God gives you abil-

ity, remembering that He requires of no man more than He has given to him—therefore be not discouraged if you have little success—still go on! Are you like Zebulon, one that can handle the pen? Handle it wisely and you shall smite through the loins of kings! And if you can do but little, at least furnish the shot for others that you may help them in their works of faith and their labors of love. But let us all do something for Christ. I will never believe there is a Christian in the world who cannot do something. There is not a spider hanging on the king's wall but has its errand. There is not a nettle that grows in the corner of the churchyard but has its purpose. There is not a single insect fluttering in the breeze but accomplishes some divine decree! And I will never have it that God created any man or woman, especially any Christian, to be a blank and to be a nothing! He made you for an end. Find out what that end is—find out your niche and fill it! If it is ever so little, if it is only to be a hewer of wood and drawer of water, do something in this great battle for God and His truth! Joshua must go out and take his men. I think I see him. He appears to have been a man of war from his youth. But what a motley host he had to choose from! Why, they were a set of *slaves*—they had never seen a sword in their lives, except in the hands of the Egyptians! They were poor, miserable creatures. They were cowards when they saw their old enemies at the Red Sea! And now their weapons were those which were washed up from the Red Sea and their regimentals were of all descriptions upon earth! Joshua, however, chooses out the strongest of them and says, “Come with me.” It was, indeed, as one called it, a “ragged regiment” with which he went to fight—and yet the ragged regiment was the victorious one! Joshua won the day against the Amalekites who had been trained to a predatory life. So, you children of God, you may know little of the tactics of warfare—your enemies may overthrow you in arguments and annihilate you in logic—but, if you are God's children, they that are with you are more than a match for your foes—you shall live to see them yet dead upon the field—only fight on with faith in God and you shall be victorious!

But this is not all. Joshua might have fought. But he would have been routed, had it not been for Moses on the brow of the hill. They were *both* necessary! Do you not see the battle? It is not on a very large scale, but it is still worthy of your earnest attention. There is Amalek, rushing to the war with discordant cries—look!—Israel is repulsing them and Amalek flees! But what is it that I notice? Now Israel turns back and flees. Now again they rally and Amalek is put to the flight! Lo, they are cut to pieces by the sword of Joshua—mighty Amalek wavers like the corn beneath the mower's scythe. The many of Amalek are disappearing! But again! Again

the battle wavers—Joshua flees—but once again he rallies his troops! And have you not observed the wondrous phenomenon? There, on the brow of the hill stands Moses. You will notice that when his hands were outstretched, Israel routed Amalek. But the moment when, from weariness, he dropped his hands—then Amalek had a temporary victory! And when again he held up his rod, Israel routed the foe! Each time the hand of prayer fell down, victory wavered between the combatants. Do you see the venerable Intercessor? Moses, being an aged man, becomes weary from standing so many hours. They seat him upon a stone—still, arms are not iron and the hands are drooping. But look! His eyes are flashing fire and his hands are lifted up to heaven—tears are beginning to flow down his cheeks and his short prayers are going to heaven like so many darts which shall find their target in the ears of God! Do you see him? He is the hinge of victory—as he falters, Amalek prevails—and as he is strong, the chosen people gain the victory. Look! Aaron is holding Moses' hand for a moment—and Hur is also supporting them. And the good old man changes his hands, for the battle lasts all day long and in the hot sun it is wearisome work to hold them in one position. But see how courageously he holds them! Stiff, as though they were cut out of stone. Weary and worn, still his hands are outstretched, as if he were a statue and his friends assist his zeal. And see now, the ranks of Amalek are broken like thin clouds before a Biscay gale. They flee! They flee! Still Moses' hands are motionless. Still they fight. Still the Amalekites flee. Still Joshua prevails until, at last, all the foes lie dead on the plain and Joshua and his men return with shouts of joy!

Now this teaches that there must be prayer as well as effort. Minister! Preach on. But you shall have no success unless you pray! If you do not know how to wrestle with God on your knees you will find it hard work to wrestle with men on your feet in the pulpit. You may make efforts to do so, but you shall not be successful unless you back up your efforts with prayer! You are not so likely to fail in your efforts as in your prayers. We never read that Joshua's hand was weary with wielding the sword, but Moses' hand was weary with holding the rod. The more spiritual the duty, the more apt we are to tire of it. We could stand and preach all day, but we could not pray all day. We could go forth to see the sick all day, but we could not be in our closets all day one-half so easily! To spend a night with God in prayer would be far more difficult than to spend a night with man in preaching. Oh, take care, take care, church of Christ, that you do not cease your prayers! Above all, I speak to my own much-loved church, my own people. You have loved me and I have loved you—and God has given us great success and blessed us. But mark it well—I

trace all of it to *your prayers*. You have assembled together in multitudes, perfectly unparalleled, to pray for me on each Monday evening and I know I am mentioned at your family altars as one who is very dear to your hearts. But I am afraid lest you should cease your prayers. Let the world say, “Down with him.” I will stand against them all if you will pray for me! But if you cease your prayers, it is all up with me and all over with you—your prayers make us mighty. The praying legion is the thundering legion! If I might compare myself to a military commander, I would say that when I see my men rise to pray in such large numbers, I feel like Napoleon when he sent out his old guards. The battle had wavered. “There,” he said, “they go. Now the victory is sure.” Or, like our own guards, the black caps, who, wherever they went carried victory with them. The praying legion is a thundering legion everywhere! Men can stand against anything but prayer! We would pray the very gates of hell off their hinges if we could pray as some men have done. Oh, that we had might in prayer! Do not, I beseech you, I ENTREAT YOU, do not cease to pray! Cease what you please, but do not give up that! Down on your knees—wrestle with God and verily the Lord our God will bless us! “And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”

III. And now I am to close up with just a few remarks, in the third place, TO STIR YOU UP TO THE WARFARE. Remember, O children of God, that there are many things that should make you valiant for God and for His truth. The first thing I will bring to your remembrance is the fact that this warfare in which you are engaged is a hereditary warfare. It is not one which you began, but it is one which has been handed to you from the moment when the blood of Abel cried aloud for vengeance! Each martyr who has died has passed the blood-red flag to the next and he in turn has passed it on to another. Every confessor who has been nailed to the stake to burn has lit his candle and handed it to another and said, “Take care of that!” And now here is the old “sword of the Lord and of Gideon.” Remember what hands have handled the hilt. Remember what arms have wielded it! Remember how often it has “pierced to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow.” Will you disgrace it? *Will you disgrace it?* There is the great banner—it has waved in many a breeze. Long before the flag of this, our land, was made, this flag of Christ was borne aloft. Will you stain it? *Will you stain it?* Will you not hand it to your children, still unsullied and say, “Go on, go on; we leave you the heritage of war. Go on, go on and conquer! What your fathers did, do again. Keep up the war, till time shall end”? I love my Bible because it is a Bible baptized with blood. I love it all the better because it has the blood of Tyndale on it. I love it because it has on it the blood of John Bradford and Rowland

Taylor and Hooper. I love it because it is stained with blood! I sometimes think I like the baptismal pool because that has been stained with blood and is now upon the continent, forbidden by law. I love it because I see in it the blood of men and of women who had been martyred because they loved the truth of God. Will you not, then, stand by the banner of truth, after such an illustrious pedigree of warriors has held it in their hands?

I would that I could have addressed you as I desired, but my voice fails me. I cannot, therefore, urge you, except by one consideration and that is the prospect of ultimate victory. It is certain that before long we shall triumph. Therefore let us not give up the fight! I have been much gratified of late to hear that there is a revival in the ranks of Christ's church. Here and there I hear of great evangelists who are starting up. Some have said to me, when they have mentioned their names, "What say you to them?" My answer is, "Would God that all the Lord's servants were prophets!" Oh, that God might send thousands and thousands of men who would gather multitudes together to hear His word! I would that the day would come when every church and every chapel in England were as full of souls as this and as large as this! I think the churches are reviving. But if they are not, still victory is certain—God will still get the victory! Jehovah will triumph. Satan may dream he will, but he will not! Therefore, brothers and sisters, on to victory! Let the crown that is before you nerve you to the fight! To victory! To victory! And on, on, on! For God is with you! Remember the great Intercessor—Christ is on the hill and while you are in the valley He pleads and must prevail! Therefore go on and conquer for Christ's sake!

I can no longer address you, but must finish up by repeating the words with which I always like to conclude my sermons—"He that believes on the Lord Jesus and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believes not shall be damned!" Oh that you would believe in Christ! Oh that God would give you faith to put your trust in Him! This is the only way of salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved."

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CONFESSION OF SIN—A SERMON WITH SEVEN TEXTS NO. 113

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 18, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“I have sinned.”
PHARAOH—Exodus 9:27.***

MY sermon this morning will have seven texts, and yet I pledge myself that there shall be but three different words in the whole of them; for it so happens that the seven texts are all alike, occurring in seven different portions of God’s holy word. I shall require, however, to use the whole of them to exemplify different cases; and I must request those of you who have brought your Bibles with you to refer to the texts as I shall mention them.

The subject of this morning’s discourse will be this—CONFESSION OF SIN. We know that this is absolutely necessary to salvation. Unless there is a true and hearty confession of our sins to God, we have no promise that we shall find mercy through the blood of the Redeemer. “Whoever confesses his sins and forsakes them shall find mercy.” But there is no promise in the Bible to the man or woman who will not confess his sins. As upon every point of Scripture, there is a liability of being deceived, so more especially in the matter of confession of sin. There are many who make a confession and a confession before God who, notwithstanding, receive no blessing because their confession has not in it certain marks which are required by God to prove it genuine and sincere and which demonstrate it to be the work of the Holy Spirit. My text this morning consists of three words, “I have sinned.” And you will see how these words, in the lips of different men, indicate very different feelings. While one says, “I have sinned,” and receives forgiveness—another we shall meet with says, “I have sinned,” and goes his way to blacken himself with worse crimes than before and dive into greater depths of sin than heretofore he had committed.

**THE HARDENED SINNER
PHARAOH—“I have sinned.”—Exodus 9:27.**

I. The first case I shall bring before you is that of the HARDENED SINNER who, when under terror, says, “I have sinned.” And you will find the text in the book of Exodus, the 9th chapter and 27th verse—“And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous and I and my people are wicked.”

But why this confession from the lips of the haughty tyrant? He was not often likely to humble himself before Jehovah. Why does the proud one bow himself? You will judge of the value of his confession when you hear the circumstances under which it was made. “And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven. And the Lord sent thunder and hail and the fire ran along upon the ground. And the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So that there was hail and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.” “Now,” said Pharaoh, while the thunder is rolling through the sky, while the lightning-flashes are setting the very ground on fire and while the hail is descending in big lumps of ice—“Now,” he says, “I have sinned.” He is but a type and specimen of multitudes of the same class. How many a hardened rebel on shipboard, when the timbers are strained and creaking, when the mast is broken and the ship is drifting before the gale, when the hungry waves are opening their mouths to swallow the ship up alive and quick as those that go into the pit of hell—how many a hardened sailor has then bowed his knees, with tears in his eyes and cried, “I have sinned”? But of what use and of what value was his confession? The repentance that was born in the storm died in the calm! That repentance of his that was begotten amidst the thunder and the lightning ceased as soon as all was hushed in quiet. And the man who was a pious mariner when on board ship became the most wicked and abominable of sailors when he placed his foot on *terra firma!*

How often, too, have we seen this in a storm of thunder and lightning? Many a man’s cheek is blanched when he hears the thunder rolling. His eyes start to tear and he cries, “O God, I have sinned,” while the rafters of his house are shaking and the very ground beneath him reeling at the voice of God which is full of majesty! But alas, for such a repentance! When the sun again shines and the black clouds are withdrawn, sin comes again upon the man and he becomes worse than before! How many of the same sort of confessions, too, have we seen in times of cholera and fever and pestilence? Then our churches have been crammed with hearers, who, because so many funerals have passed their doors, or so many have died in the streets, could not refrain from going up to God’s house to confess their sins! And under that visitation, when one, two and three have been lying dead in the house, or next door, how many

have thought they would really turn to God? But, alas, when the pestilence had done its work, conviction ceased and when the bell had tolled the last time for a death caused by cholera, then their hearts ceased to beat with penitence and their tears flowed no more!

Have I any such here this morning? I doubt not I have hardened persons who would scorn the very idea of religion, who would count me a cant and hypocrite if I should endeavor to press it home upon them—but who know right well that religion is true and who feel it in their times of terror! If I have such here this morning, let me solemnly say to them, “Sirs, you have forgotten the feelings you had in your hours of alarm. But, remember, God has not forgotten the vows you then made!” Sailor, you said if God would spare you to see the land, again, you would be His servant. You are not so, you have lied to God, you have made Him a false promise—you have never kept the vow which your lips did utter! Many of you have said, on a bed of sickness, that if He would spare your life, you would never again sin as you did before—but here you are and this week’s sins shall speak for themselves! You are no better than you were before your sickness. Could you lie to your fellow man and yet go unreprieved? And do you think that you will lie against God and yet go unpunished? No! The vow, however rashly made, is registered in heaven and though it is a vow which you cannot perform, yet as it is a vow which you have made yourself and made voluntarily, too, you shall be punished for not keeping it. And God shall execute vengeance upon you at last because you said you would turn from your ways and then, when the blow was removed, you did not! A great outcry has been raised of late against tickets-of-leave. I have no doubt there are some men here who before high heaven stand in the same position as the ticket-of-leave men stand to our government! They were about to die, as they thought. They promised good behavior if they might be spared and they are here today on ticket-of-leave in this world—and how have they fulfilled their promise? Justice might raise the same outcry against them as they do against the burglars so constantly let loose upon us. The avenging angel might say, “O God, these men said if they were spared they would be so much better. If anything, they are worse! How have they violated their promise and how have they brought down divine wrath upon their heads!” This is the first style of penitence. And it is a style I hope none of you will imitate, for it is utterly worthless. It is of no use for you to say, “I have sinned,” merely under the influence of terror and then to forget it afterwards.

THE DOUBLE-MINDED MAN

BALAAM—“I have sinned.”—Numbers 22:34.

II. Now for a second text. I beg to introduce you to another character—the *double-minded* man who says, “I have sinned,” and feels that he has and feels it deeply, too, but who is so worldly-minded that he “loves the wages of unrighteousness.” The character I have chosen to illustrate this is that of *Balaam*. Turn to the book of Numbers, the 22nd chapter and the 34th verse—“And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned.” But yet he went on with his sin afterwards. One of the strangest characters of the whole world is Balaam! I have often marveled at that man. He seems really, in another sense, to have come up to the lines of Ralph Erskine—

**“To good and evil equal bent
And both a devil and a saint.”**

For he did seem to be so. At times no man could speak more eloquently and more truthfully, but at other times he exhibited the most mean and sordid covetousness that could disgrace human nature! Think you see Balaam. He stands upon the brow of the hill and there lie the multitudes of Israel at his feet. He is bid to curse them and he cries, “How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?” And God, opening his eyes, he begins to tell even about the coming of Christ and he says, “I shall see Him but not now: I shall behold Him but not near.” And then he winds up his oration by saying—“Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like His!” And you will say of that man, he is a hopeful character. Wait till he has come off the brow of the hill and you will hear him give the most diabolical advice to the king of Moab which it was even possible for Satan, himself, to suggest! Said he to the king, “You cannot overthrow these people in battle, for God is with them. Try and entice them from their God.” And you know how, with wanton lusts, they of Moab tried to entice the children of Israel from allegiance to Jehovah, so that this man seemed to have the voice of an angel at one time and yet the very soul of a devil in his heart! He was a terrible character. He was a man of two things—a man who went all the way with two things to a very great extent. I know the Scripture says, “No man can serve two masters.” Now this is often misunderstood. Some read it, “No man can *serve two masters*.” Yes he can, he can serve three or four! The way to read it is this—“No man can serve two *masters*.” They cannot both be masters! He can serve two, but they cannot both be his *master*. A man can serve two who are not his masters, or twenty. He may live for twenty different purposes, but he cannot live for more than one master purpose—there can only be one master purpose in his soul. But Balaam labored to serve two—it was

like the people of whom it was said, “They feared the Lord and served other gods.” Or like Rufus, who was a loaf of the same leaven. For you know our old king Rufus painted God on one side of his shield and the devil on the other and had underneath, the motto—“Ready for both, catch who can.” There are many such, who are ready for both! They meet a minister and how pious and holy they are! On the Sabbath they are the most respectable and upright people in the world, as you would think. Indeed they even effect a drawling in their speech, which they think to be eminently religious. But on a week day, if you want to find the greatest rogues and cheats, they are some of those men who are so sanctimonious in their piety! Now, rest assured, my hearers, that no confession of sin can be genuine unless it is a whole-hearted one! It is of no use for you to say, “I have sinned,” and then keep on sinning. “I have sinned,” you say, and it is a fair, fair face you show. But, alas, alas, for the sins you will go away and commit! Some men seem to be born with two characters. I noticed when in the library at Trinity College, Cambridge, a very fine statue of Lord Byron. The librarian said to me, “Stand here, sir.” I looked and I said, “What a fine intellectual countenance! What a grand genius he was!” “Come here,” he said, “to the other side.” “Ah, what a demon! There stands the man that could defy the Deity!” He seemed to have such a scowl and such a dreadful leer on his face even as Milton would have painted Satan when he said—“Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven.” I turned away and said to the librarian, “Do you think the artist designed this?” “Yes,” he said, “he wished to picture the two characters—the great, the grand, the almost superhuman genius that he possessed—and yet the enormous mass of sin that was in his soul.” There are some men here of the same sort. I dare say, like Balaam, they would overthrow everything in argument, but with their enchantments, they could work miracles. And yet at the same time there is something about them which betrays a horrid character of sin—as great as that which would appear to be their character for righteousness! Balaam, you know, offered sacrifices to God upon the altar of Baal—that was just the type of his character. So many do. They offer sacrifices to God on the shrine of Mammon. And while they will give to the building of a church and distribute to the poor, they will, at the other door of their counting-house, grind the poor for bread and press the very blood out of the widow, that they may enrich themselves. Ah, it is idle and useless for you to say, “I have sinned,” unless you mean it from your heart! That double-minded man’s confession is of no avail.

THE INSINCERE MAN

SAUL—“I have sinned.”—1 Samuel 15:24.

III. And now a third character and a third text. In the first book of Samuel, the 15th chapter and 24th verse—“And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned.”

Here is the *insincere man*—the man who is not like Balaam, to a certain extent sincere in two things. But the man who is just the opposite—who has no prominent point in his character at all but is molded everlastingly by the circumstances that are passing over his head. Such a man was *Saul*. Samuel reproved him and he said, “I have sinned.” But he did not mean what he said—for if you read the whole verse you will find him saying, “I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, *because I feared the people*,” which was a lying excuse! Saul never feared anybody. He was always ready enough to do his own will—he was the despot! And just before this, he had pleaded another excuse that he had saved the bullocks and lambs to offer to Jehovah, and therefore, both excuses could not have been true. You remember, my friends, that the most prominent feature in the character of Saul was his insincerity. One day he fetched David from his bed, as he thought, to put him to death in his house. Another time he declares, “God forbid that I should do anything against you, my son, David.” One day, because David saved his life, he said, “You are more righteous than I. I will do so no more.” The day before he had gone out to fight against his own son-in-law in order to slay him! Sometimes Saul was among the prophets, easily turned into a prophet and then afterwards among the witches. Sometimes in one place and then another and insincere in everything. How many such we have in every Christian assembly! Men who are very easily molded! Say what you please to them, they always agree with you. They have affectionate dispositions, very likely a tender conscience. But then the conscience is so remarkably tender that when touched, it seems to give and you are afraid to probe deeper—it heals as soon it is wounded! I think I used the very singular comparison once before, which I must use again—there are some men who seem to have rubber hearts. If you do but touch them, there is an impression made at once. But then it is of no use—it soon restores itself to its original character! You may press them whatever way you wish, they are so elastic you can always affect your purpose. But then they are not fixed in their character and soon return to be what they were before. O sirs, too many of you have done the same—you have bowed your heads in church and said, “We have erred and strayed from Your ways.” And you did not mean what you said. You have come to your minister. You have said, “I repent

of my sins.” You did not, then, feel you were a sinner! You only said it to please him. And now you attend the House of God—no one more impressive than you. The tears will run down your cheeks in a moment but yet, notwithstanding all that, the tears are dried as quickly as they are brought forth and you remain, to all intents and purposes, the same as you were before! To say, “I have sinned,” in an unmeaning manner, is worse than worthless, for it is a mockery of God thus to confess with insincerity of heart!

I have been brief upon this character, for it seemed to touch upon that of Balaam—though any thinking man will at once see there was a real contrast between Saul and Balaam—even though there is an affinity between the two. Balaam was the great bad man, great in all he did. Saul was little in everything except in stature—little in his good and little in his vice, but he was too much of a fool to be desperately bad, though too wicked to be at any time good. Balaam was great in both: the man who could at one time defy Jehovah and yet at another time could say, “If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, my God, to do less or more.”

THE DOUBTFUL PENITENT **ACHAN—“I have sinned.”—Joshua 7:20.**

IV. And now I have to introduce to you a very interesting case. It is the case of the doubtful penitent, the case of *Achan*, in the book of Joshua, the 7th chapter and the 20th verse—“And Achan answered Joshua, indeed I have sinned.”

You know that Achan stole some of the prey from the city of Jericho—that he was discovered by lot and put to death. I have singled this case out as the representative of some whose characters are doubtful on their death beds. They apparently repent, but the most we can say of them is that we hope their souls are saved at last but, indeed, we cannot tell. Achan, you are aware, was stoned with stones for defiling Israel. But I find in the Mishna, an old Jewish exposition of the Bible, these words, “Joshua said to Achan, the Lord shall trouble you *this* day.” And the note upon it is—“He said *this* day, implying that he was only to be troubled in this life, by being stoned to death but that God would have mercy on his soul, seeing that he had made a full confession of his sin.” And I, too, am inclined, from reading the chapter, to concur in the idea of my venerable and now glorified predecessor, Dr. Gill, in believing that Achan really was saved although he was put to death for the crime, as an example. For you will observe how kindly Joshua spoke to him. He said, “My son, give,

I pray you, glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession unto Him and tell me now what you have done, hide it not from me.” And you find Achan making a very full confession. He says, “Indeed, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel and thus and thus have I done. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonian garment and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent and the silver under it.” It seems so full a confession that if I might be allowed to judge, I would say, “I hope to meet Achan the sinner before the Throne of God.” But Matthew Henry has no such opinion. And many other expositors consider that as his body was destroyed, so was his soul. I have, therefore, selected his case as being one of doubtful repentance. Ah, dear friends, it has been my lot to stand by many a deathbed and to see many such a repentance as this! I have seen the man, when worn to a skeleton, sustained by pillows in his bed—and he has said, when I have talked to him of judgment to come—“Sir, I feel I have been guilty, but Christ is good. I trust in Him.” And I have said within myself, “I believe the man’s soul is safe.” But I have always come away with the melancholy reflection that I had no proof of it, beyond his own words, for it needs proof in acts and in future life in order to sustain any firm conviction of a man’s salvation. You know that great fact, that a physician once kept a record of a thousand persons who thought they were dying and whom he thought were penitents. He wrote their names down in a book as those, who, if they had died, would go to heaven. They did not die, they lived. And he says that out of the whole thousand he had not three persons who turned out well, afterwards, but they returned to their sins again and were as bad as ever. Ah, dear friends, I hope none of you will have such a deathbed repentance as that! I hope your minister or your parents will not have to stand by your bedside and then go away and say, “Poor fellow, I hope he is saved. But alas, deathbed repentances are such flimsy things, such poor, such trivial grounds of hope that I am afraid, after all, his soul may be lost.” Oh, to die with a full assurance! Oh, to die with an abundant entrance, leaving a testimony behind that we have departed this life in peace! That is a far happier way to die than in a doubtful manner, lying sick, hovering between two worlds and neither ourselves nor our friends knowing to which of the two worlds we are going! May God grant us grace to give in our lives evidences of true conversion, that our case may not be doubtful!

THE REPENTANCE OF DESPAIR

JUDAS—“I have sinned.”—Matthew 27:4.

V. I shall not detain you too long, I trust, but I must now give you another bad case—the worst of all. It is THE REPENTANCE OF DESPAIR. Will you turn to the 27th chapter of Matthew and the 4th verse? There you have a dreadful case of the repentance of despair. You will recognize the character the moment I read the verse—“And Judas said, I have sinned.” Yes, Judas the traitor, who had betrayed his Master. When he saw that his Master was condemned, he “repented and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood, and he cast down the pieces in the temple and went”—and what?—“*and hanged himself.*” Here is the worst kind of repentance of all—in fact, I know not that I am justified in calling it repentance. It must be called remorse of conscience! But Judas did confess his sin and then went and hanged himself. Oh, that dreadful, that terrible, that hideous confession of despair! Have you ever seen it? If you never have, then bless God that you were never called to see such a sight! I have seen it once in my life. I pray God I may never see it again—the repentance of the man who sees death staring him in the face and who says, “I have sinned.” You tell him that Christ has died for sinners. And he answers, “There is no hope for me. I have cursed God to His face. I have defied Him. My day of grace I know is past; my conscience is seared with a hot iron. I am dying and I know I shall be lost!” Such a case as that happened long ago. You know it and it is on record—the case of Francis Spira—the most dreadful case, perhaps, except that of Judas, which is upon record in the memory of man! Oh, my hearers, will any of you have such a repentance? If you do, it will be a beacon to all persons who sin in the future! If you have such a repentance as that, it will be a warning to generations yet to come! In the life of Benjamin Keach—and he, also, was one of my predecessors—I find the case of a man who had been a professor of religion but had departed from the profession and had gone into awful sin. When he came to die, Keach, with many other friends, went to see him, but they could never stay with him above five minutes at a time, for he said, “Get you gone! It is of no use your coming to me. I have sinned away the Holy Spirit. I am like Esau, I have sold my birthright, and though I seek it carefully with tears, I can never find it again.” And then he would repeat dreadful words, like these—“My mouth is filled with gravel stones, and I drink wormwood day and night. Tell me not, tell me not of Christ! I know He is a Savior, but I hate Him, and He hates me. I know I must die. I know I must perish!” And then followed doleful cries, and hideous noises, such as none could

bear. They returned again in his placid moments only to stir him up once more, and make him cry out in his despair, “I am lost! I am lost! It is of no use your telling me anything about it!” Ah, there may be a man here who may have such a death as that. Let me warn him, before he comes to it, and may God the Holy Spirit grant that that man may be turned unto God and made a true penitent. And then he need not have any more fear, for he who has had his sins washed away in a Savior’s blood need not have any remorse for his sins, for they are pardoned through the Redeemer!

THE REPENTANCE OF THE SAINT
Job—“I have sinned.”—Job 7:20.

VI. And now I come into daylight. I have been taking you through dark and dreary confessions. I shall detain you there no longer but bring you out to the two good confessions which I have to read to you. The first is that of Job in the 7th chapter at the 20th verse—“I have sinned, what shall I do unto You, O You preserver of men?” This is the *repentance of the saint*. Job was a saint, but he sinned. This is the repentance of the man who already is a child of God, an acceptable repentance before God. But as I intend to dwell upon this in the evening, I shall now leave it, for fear of wearying you. David was a specimen of this kind of repentance, and I would have you carefully study his penitential psalms, the language of which is always full of weeping humility and earnest penitence.

THE BLESSED CONFESSION
THE PRODIGAL—“I have sinned.”—Luke 15:18.

VII. I come now to the last instance which I shall mention. It is the case of the prodigal. In Luke 15:18, we find the prodigal says—“Father, I have sinned.” Oh, here is *a blessed confession!* Here is that which proves a man to be a regenerate character—“Father, I have sinned.” Let me picture the scene. There is the prodigal. He has run away from a good home and a kind father and he has spent all his money with harlots. And now he has none left. He goes to his old companions and asks them for relief. They laugh him to scorn. “Oh,” he says, “you have drunk my wine many a day. I have always been paymaster to you in all our revelries. Will you not help me?” “Get you gone,” they say. And he is turned out of doors. He goes to all his friends with whom he had associated but no man gives him anything. At last a certain citizen of the country said—“You need something to do, do you? Well, go and feed my swine.” The poor prodigal,

the son of a rich landowner who had a great fortune of his own, has to go out to feed swine. And he a Jew, too!—the worst employment (to his mind) to which he could be put! See him there, in squalid rags, feeding swine! And what are his wages? Why, so little, that he “would gladly have filled his belly with the husks the swine eat, but no man gave to him.” Look, there he is, with the fellow commoners of the sty, in all his mire and filthiness. Suddenly a thought put there by the good Spirit, strikes his mind. “How is it,” says he, “that in my father’s house there is bread enough and to spare and I perish with hunger? I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you and am no more worthy to be called your son—make me as one of your hired servants.” Off he goes. He begs his way from town to town. Sometimes he gets a lift on a coach, perhaps, but at other times he goes trudging his way up barren hills and down desolate vales, all alone. And now, at last, he comes to the hill outside the village and sees his father’s house down below. There it is—the old poplar tree—and there are the stacks round which he and his brother used to run and play. And at the sight of the old homestead, all the feelings and associations of his former life rush upon him and tears run down his cheeks—and he is almost ready to run away, again. He says, “I wonder whether Father’s dead. I daresay I broke Mother’s heart when I went away. I always was her favorite. And if they are, either of them, alive, they will never see me again. They will shut the door in my face. What am I to do? I cannot go back—I am afraid to go forward.” And while he was thus deliberating, his father had been walking on the housetop, looking out for his son. And though he could not see his father, his father could see him! Well, the father comes down stairs with all his might, runs up to him and while he is thinking of running away, his father’s arms are round his neck and he begins kissing him, like a loving father, indeed! And then the son begins—“Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight and am no more worthy to be called your son,” and he was going to say, “Make me as one of your hired servants.” But his father puts his hand on his mouth! “No more of that,” he says. “I forgive you all. You shall not say anything about being a hired servant—I will have none of that. Come along,” he says, “come in, poor prodigal.” He says to the servants, “Bring here the best robe and put it on him and put shoes on his poor bleeding feet. And bring here the fatted calf and kill it. And let us eat and be merry. For this, my son, was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.” Oh, what a precious reception for one of the chief of sinners! Good Matthew Henry says—“His father saw him, there were eyes of mercy. He ran to meet him, there were legs of

mercy. He put his arms round his neck, there were arms of mercy. He kissed him, there were kisses of mercy. He said to him, there were words of mercy—bring here the best robe, there were deeds of mercy, wonders of mercy—all mercy! Oh, what a God of mercy He is.”

Now, prodigal, you do the same! Has God put it into your heart? There are many who have been running away a long time now. Does God say, “Return”? Oh, I bid you return, then, for as surely as ever you do return, He will take you in! There never was a poor sinner, yet, who came to Christ, whom Christ turned away! If He turns you away, you will be the first. Oh, if you could but try Him! “Ah, sir, I am so black with sin, so filthy, so vile.” Well come along with you—you cannot be blacker than the prodigal! Come to your Father’s house and as surely as He is God, He will keep His word—“He that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Oh, if I might hear that some had come to Christ, this morning, I would indeed bless God! I must tell, here, for the honor of God and Christ, one remarkable circumstance and then I have done. You will remember that one morning I mentioned the case of an infidel who had been a scorner and scoffer but who, through reading one of my printed sermons, had been brought to God’s house and then to God’s feet. Well, last Christmas day, the same infidel gathered together all his books, and went into the marketplace at Norwich, and there made a public recantation of all his errors, and a profession of Christ! And then taking up all his books which he had written, and had in his house, on evil subjects, burned them in the sight of the people! I have blessed God for such a wonder of divine grace as that, and pray that there may be many more such, who, though they are born prodigal, will yet return home, saying, “I have sinned.”

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PREACHING FOR THE POOR

NO. 114

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 25, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“The poor have the gospel preached to them.”
Matthew 11:5.***

JOHN, the forerunner of Christ, had some followers who continued with him after Christ had come in the flesh and openly manifested Himself among the people. These disciples were in doubt as to whether Jesus was the Messiah or not. I believe that John, himself, had no doubt whatever upon the matter, for he had received positive revelations and had given substantial testimonies on the subject. But in order to relieve their doubts, John said to his disciples, in some such words, “Go and ask Him yourselves.” And, therefore, he dispatched them with this message, “Tell us whether You are He that should come, or do we look for another?” Jesus Christ, discontinuing His preaching for a while, said, “Stay and receive your answer.” And instead of giving them an affirmative reply, “I am that Messiah,” He said, “Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see: The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear. The dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” As much as to say, “That is My answer, these things are My testimonies—on the one hand that I come from God and—on the other hand, that I am *the Messiah*.” You will see the truth and force of this reply if you will observe that it was prophesied of the Messiah, that He should do the very things which Jesus at that moment was doing. It is said of Messiah, in the 35th chapter of Isaiah, at the 5th and 6th verses, “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert.” The Jews had forgotten this. They only looked for a Messiah who should be clothed with temporal grandeur and dignity and they overlooked the teaching of Isaiah that he should be “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” And besides that, you observe they overlooked the miracles which it was prophesied should attend the coming of the glorious one, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus gave this as His answer—a practical demonstration of John’s problem, proving it to an absolute certainty! But He not only referred to the *miracles*, He gave them a further proof—“The poor have the gospel preached to them.” This, also, was one evidence that He was Messiah. For Isaiah, the great Messianic prophet, had said, “He shall preach the

gospel unto the meek.” That is, the poor. And in that Jesus did so, it was proved that He was the man intended by Isaiah. Besides, Zechariah mentions the congregation of the poor who attend on Him and therein evidently foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, the preacher to the poor!

I shall not, however, dwell upon these circumstances this morning. It must be apparent to every hearer that here is sufficient proof that Jesus Christ is the person who had been foretold under the name of Shiloh, or Messiah. We all believe *that* and therefore, there is little need that I should try to prove what you have already received. I rather select my text this morning as one of the constant marks of the gospel in all ages and in every land. “The poor have the gospel preached to them.” This is to be its *semper idem*, its constant stamp! And we believe where the poor have *not* the gospel preached unto them, there is a departure from the dispensation of the gospel—the forsaking of this which was to be a fundamental trait and characteristic of the gospel dispensation. “The poor have the gospel preached to them.”

I find that these words will bear three translations, I shall, therefore, have three heads, which shall be composed of three translations of the text. The first is that of the *authorized version*—“The poor have the gospel preached to them.” It is also Tyndal’s version. The second is *the version of Cranmer, and the version of Geneva*, which is the best, “The poor are evangelized,” that is to say, they not only *hear* the gospel, but they are influenced by it—the poor receive it. The last is a translation of *some eminent writers* and above all, of *Wycliffe*, which amused me when I read it, although I believe it to be as correct as any of the others. Wycliffe translates it—“pore men ben taken to prechyng of the gospel.” The verb may be equally well translated in the active as in the passive sense—“The poor have taken to the preaching of the gospel.” That is to be one of the marks of the gospel dispensation in all times!

I. First, then, THE AUTHORIZED VERSION, “The poor have the gospel preached to them.” It was so in Christ’s day. It is to be so with Christ’s gospel to the end of time. Almost every impostor who has come into the world has aimed principally at the rich and the mighty and the respectable—very few impostors have found it to be worth their while to make it prominent in their preaching that they preach to the poor. They go before princes to promulgate their doctrines. They seek the halls of nobles where they might expatiate upon their pretended revelations. Few of them think it worth their while to address themselves to those who have been most wickedly called, “the swinish multitude,” and to speak to them the glorious things of the gospel of Christ. But it is one delightful mark of Christ’s dispensation that He aims, first, at the poor! “The poor have the gospel preached to them.” It was wise of Him to do so. If we would fire a building, it is best to light it at the basement—so our Savior—when He would save a world and convert men of all classes and all ranks, begins

at the lowest rank that the fire may burn upwards, knowing right well that what was received by the poor will ultimately, by His grace, be received by the rich also. Nevertheless, He chose this to be given to His disciples and to be the mark of His gospel—"The poor have the gospel preached to them." Now, I have some things to say this morning which I think are absolutely necessary, if the poor are to have the gospel preached unto them.

In the first place, let me say that *the gospel must be preached where the poor can come and hear it*. How can the poor have the gospel preached to them, if they cannot come and listen to it? And yet how many of our places of worship are there into which they cannot come and into which, if they could come, they would only come as inferior creatures? They may sit in the back seats but are not to be known and recognized as anything like other people. Hence the absolute necessity of having places of worship large enough to accommodate the multitude and hence, moreover, the obligation to go out into the highways and hedges! If the poor are to have the gospel preached unto them, then we must take it where they can get it. If I wanted to preach to English people, it would be of no use for me to go and stand on one of the peaks of the Himalayas and begin preaching—they could not hear me there. And it is of little use to build a gorgeous structure for a fashionable congregation and then to think of preaching to the poor. They cannot come any more than the Afrikaans can make their journey from Africa and listen to me here. I would not expect them to come to such a place, nor will they willingly enter it. The gospel should be preached, then, where the poor will come. And if they will not come after it, then let it be taken to them. We should have places where there is accommodation for them and where they are regarded and respected as much as any other rank and condition of men! It is with this view, alone, that we have labored earnestly to be the means of building a large place of worship, because I feel that although the bulk of my congregation in New Park-street Chapel are poor, yet there are many poor who can by no possibility enter the doors because we cannot find room for the multitudes to be received. You ask me why I do not preach in the street. I reply I would do so, and am constantly doing so in every place except London. Here I cannot do it, since it would amount to an absolute breach of the peace—it being impossible to conceive what a multitude of people must necessarily be assembled. I trembled when I saw 12,000 on the last occasion I preached in the open air, and therefore, I have thought it best, for the present at least, to desist, until happily there shall be fewer to follow me. Otherwise my heart is in the open air movement. I practice it everywhere else, and I pray God to give to our ministers zeal and earnestness, that they may take the gospel into the streets, highways, and byways, and compel the people to come in, that the house may be filled! Oh that God would give us this

characteristic mark of His precious grace—that the poor might have the gospel preached unto them!

“But,” you reply, “there are plenty of churches and chapels to which they might come.” I answer, yes, but that is only one half of the matter. *The gospel must be preached attractively* before the poor will have the gospel preached unto them. Why, there is no attraction in the gospel to the great mass of our race as it is currently preached. I confess that when I have a violent headache and cannot sleep, I could almost wish for some droning minister to preach to me. I feel certain I could go to sleep, then, for I have heard some under the drowsy influence of whose eloquence I could most comfortably snore! But it is not at all likely that the poor will ever go to hear such preachers as these. If they are preached to in fine terms—in grandiloquent language which they cannot lay hold of—the poor will not have the gospel preached to them, for they will not *go* to hear it! They must have something attractive to them. We must preach as Christ did. We must tell anecdotes and stories and parables as He did. We must come down and make the gospel attractive. The reason why the old Puritan preachers could get congregations was this—they did not give their hearers dry theology. They illustrated it! They had an anecdote from this and a quaint passage from that classic author. Here a verse of poetry. Here and there even a quip or pun—a thing which nowadays is a sin above all sins but which was constantly committed by these preachers, whom I have always esteemed as the patterns of pulpit eloquence. Christ Jesus was an attractive preacher! He sought above all means to set the pearl in a frame of gold, that it might attract the attention of the people. He was not willing to place Himself in a parish church and preach to a large congregation of thirteen and a half, like our good brothers in the city, but would preach in such a style that people felt they must go to hear Him! Some of them gnashed their teeth in rage and left His presence in wrath, but the multitudes still thronged to Him to hear and to be healed. It was no dull work to hear this King of preachers—He was too much in earnest to be dull and too humane to be incomprehensible! I believe that until this is imitated, the poor will not have the gospel preached to them. There must be an interesting style adopted to bring the people to hear. But if we adopt such a style, they will call us clownish, vulgar and so on. Blessed be God, we have long learned that vulgarity is a very different thing from what some men suppose! We have been so taught that we are willing to be even clowns for Christ’s sake, and as long as we are seeing souls saved, we are not likely to alter our course! During this last week I have seen, I believe, a score of persons who have been in the lowest ranks, the very meanest of sinners, the greatest of transgressors who have, through preaching in this place, been restored and reclaimed. Do you think, then, that I shall shear my locks to please the Philistine? Oh no! By the grace of God, Samson knows where his

strength lies and is not likely to do that to please any man or any set of men! Preaching must reach the popular ear. And to get at the people, it must be interesting to them and by the grace of God we hope it shall be!

But, in the next place, if the poor are to have the gospel preached to them, *it must be preached simply*. It is a waste of time to preach Latin to you, is it not? To the multitude of people it is of no use delivering a discourse in Greek. Possibly five or six of the assembly might be mightily edified and go away delighted. But what of that? The mass would retire unedified and uninstructed! You talk about the education of the people, don't you, and about the vast extent of English refinement? For the most part it is a dream! Ignorance is not yet buried. The language of one class of Englishmen is a dead language to another class and many a word which is very plain to many of us, is as hard and difficult a word to the multitude as if it had been culled out of Hindustani or Bengali! There are multitudes who cannot understand words composed of Latin but must have the truth of God told them in round homely Saxon if it is to reach their hearts! There is my friend the Rev. So-and-So, Doctor of Divinity he is—a great student—and whenever he finds a hard word in his books, he tells it next Sunday to his congregation. He has a little intellectual circle who think his preaching must be good because they cannot understand it and who think it proven that he must be an intelligent man because all the pews are empty! They believe he must be a very useful member of society. In fact, they compare him to Luther and think he is a second Paul because nobody will listen to him, seeing it is impossible to understand him! Well, we conceive of that good man that he may have a work to do, but we do not know what it is! There is another friend of ours, Mr. Cloudyton, who always preaches in such a style that if you should try to dissect the sermon for a week afterwards, you could by no possibility tell what he meant. If you could look at things from *his* point of view you might possibly discover something. But it appears by his preaching as if he, himself, had lost his way in a fog and were scattering a whole mass of mist about him everywhere! I suppose he goes so deep down into the subject that he stirs the mud at the bottom and he cannot find his way up again. There are some such preachers whom you cannot possibly understand. Now, we say and say very boldly, too, that while such preaching may be esteemed by some people to be good, we have no faith in it at all! If ever the world is to be reclaimed and if sinners are to be saved, we can see no likelihood in the world of its being done by such means! We think the word must be understood before it can really penetrate the conscience and the heart. And we would always be preaching such as men can understand, otherwise the poor will not “have the gospel preached to them.” Why did John Bunyan become the apostle of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire and round about? It was because John Bunyan, while he had a surpassing genius, would not condescend to cull

his language from the garden of flowers but he went into the hayfield and the meadow and plucked up his language by the roots and spoke out in words that the people used in their cottages! Why is it that God has blessed other men to the stirring of the people, to the bringing about of spiritual revivals to the renewal of the power of godliness? We believe it has always been owing to this—under God’s Spirit—that they have adopted the phraseology of the people and have not been ashamed to be despised because they talked as common people did!

But now we have something to say more important than this. We may preach, very simply, too, and very attractively and yet it may not be true that “the poor have the gospel preached to them,” for the poor may have something else preached to them beside the gospel. It is, then, highly important that we should, each of us, ask what the gospel is and that when we think we know it, we should not be ashamed to say, “This is the gospel and I will preach it boldly, though all men should deny it.” Oh, I fear that there is such a thing as preaching another gospel “which is not another, but there are some who trouble us”! There is such a thing as preaching science and philosophy attractively but not preaching the gospel! Mark—it is not *preaching*, but it is *preaching the gospel* that is the mark of Christ’s dispensation, and of His truth. Let us take care to preach fully the depravity of man. Let us dwell thoroughly upon his lost and ruined estate under the law and his restoration under the gospel. Let us preach of these three things for as a good brother said, “The gospel lies in three things, the word of God, only, the blood of Christ, only, and the Holy Spirit, only.” These three things make up the gospel! “The Bible, the Bible, alone—the religion of Protestants! The blood of Christ the only salvation from sin, the only means of the pardon of our guilt and the Holy Spirit, the only regenerator, the only converting power that will alone work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Without these three things there is no gospel! Let us take heed, then, for it is a serious matter that when the people listen to us, it is *the gospel* that we preach. Otherwise we may be as guilty as was Nero, the tyrant, who, when Rome was starving, sent his ships to Alexandria, where there was corn in plenty. But he sent them not for wheat but for sand to scatter in the arena for his gladiators. Ah, there are some who seem to do so—scattering the floor of their sanctuary—not with the good corn of the kingdom of God upon which the souls of God’s people may feed and grow, but with sand of controversy, sand of logic—which no child of God can ever receive to his soul’s profit! “The poor have the gospel preached to them.” Let us take heed that it is the gospel. Hear then, you chief of sinners, the voice of Jesus—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” “Whoever believes and is

baptized, shall be saved.” “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

And just one more hint on this point, namely, this—it must be said of us, if we would keep true to Christ’s rule and apostolic practice—that “the poor have the gospel *preached* to them.” In these days there is a growing hatred of the pulpit. The pulpit has maintained its ground many a year, but partially by its becoming inefficient, it is losing its high position. Through a timid abuse of it, instead of a strong stiff use of the pulpit, the world has come to despise it and now, most certainly, we are not a priest-ridden people one-half as much as we are a press-ridden people! By the press we are ridden, indeed! Dispatches, Journals, Gazettes and Magazines are now the judges of pulpit eloquence and style! They thrust themselves into the censor’s seat, and censure those whose office it should rather be to censure them! For my own part, I cheerfully accord to all men the liberty of abusing me. But I must protest against the lying conduct of at least one editor who has misquoted in order to pervert my meaning and has done more. He has, to his eternal disgrace, manufactured a quotation from his own head which never did occur in my works or words. The pulpit has become dishonored. It is esteemed as being of very little worth and of no esteem. Ah, we must always maintain the dignity of the pulpit. I hold that it is the Thermopylae of Christendom! It is here the battle must be fought between right and wrong—not so much with the pen, valuable as that is as an assistant—as with the living voice of earnest men, “contending earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints.” In some churches the pulpit is put away, there is a prominent altar but the pulpit is omitted. The most prominent thing under the gospel dispensation is not the altar which belonged to the Jewish dispensation but the pulpit! “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle”; that altar is Christ, but Christ has been pleased to exalt “the foolishness of preaching” to the most prominent position in His house of prayer. We must make sure that we always maintain preaching. It is this that God will bless! It is this that He has promised to crown with success! “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” We must not expect to see great changes nor any great progress of the gospel until there is greater esteem for the pulpit—more said of it and thought of it. “Well,” some may reply, “you speak of the dignity of the pulpit. I take it, you lower it yourself, sir, by speaking in such a style to your hearers.” Ah, no doubt you think so. Some pulpits die of dignity. I take it the greatest dignity in the world is the dignity of *converts*—that the glory of the pulpit is, if I may use such a metaphor, to have captives at its chariot wheels, to see converts following it—and where there are such and those from the very worst of men! *There* is a dignity in the pulpit beyond any dignity which a fine mouthing of words

and a grand selection of fantastic language could ever give to it! “The poor have the gospel preached to them.”

II. Now, the next translation is THE TRANSLATION OF GENEVA, principally used by Calvin in his commentary. It is also the translation of Thomas Cranmer, whose translation, I believe, was at least in some degree molded by the Geneva translation. He translates it thus—“The poor receive the gospel.” The Geneva translation has it, “The poor receive the glad tidings of the gospel,” which is a repetition, since glad tidings mean the same thing as gospel. The Greek has it, “The poor are evangelized.” Now, what is the meaning of this word, “evangelized”? They talk with a sneer in these days of evangelical drawing rooms and evangelicals and so on. It is one of the most singular sneers in the world—for to call a man an evangelical by way of joke is the same as calling a man a gentleman by way of scoffing at him! To say a man is one of the gossellers by way of scorn, is like calling a man a king by way of contempt! It is an honorable, a great, a glorious title and nothing is more honorable than to be ranked among the evangelicals! What is meant, then, by the people being evangelized? Old Master Burkitt, thinking that we should not easily understand the word, says that as a man is said to be Italianized by living among the Italians, getting their manners and customs and becoming a citizen of the State, so a man is *evangelized* when he lives where the gospel is preached and gets the manners and customs of those who profess it. Now, that is one meaning of the text. One of the proofs of our Savior’s mission is not only that the poor hear the word but are influenced by it and gosselized. Oh, how great a work it is to gosselize any man and to gosselize a poor man! What does it mean? It means, to make him *like* the gospel! Now, the gospel is holy, just, true, loving, honest, benevolent, kind and gracious. So, then, to gosselize a man is to make a rogue honest, to make a harlot modest, to make a profane man serious, to make a grasping man liberal, to make a covetous man benevolent, to make the drunken man sober, to make the untruthful man truthful, to make the unkind man loving, to make the hater the lover of his species and in a word, to gosselize a man is, in his outward character, to bring him into such a condition that he labors to carry out the command of Christ, “Love your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.” Gosselizing, furthermore, has something to do with an inner principle. Gosselizing a man means saving him from hell and making him a heavenly character. It means blotting out his sins, writing a new name upon his heart—the new name of God! It means bringing him to know his election, to put his trust in Christ, to renounce his sins and his good works, too, and to trust solely and wholly upon Jesus Christ as his Redeemer! Oh, what a blessed thing it is to be gosselized! How many of you have been so gosselized? The Lord grant that the whole of us may feel the influence of the gospel! I contend for this, that to gosselize a man is the greatest mir-

acle in the world! All the other miracles are wrapped up in this one. To gospelize a man, or, in other words, to convert him, is a greater work than to open the eyes of the blind—for is it not opening the eyes of the blind soul that he may see spiritual matters and understand the things of heavenly wisdom? And is not a surgical operation easier than operation on the soul? Souls we cannot touch, although science and skill have been able to remove films and cataracts from the eyes. “The lame walk.” Gospelizing a man is more than this. It is not only making a lame man walk, but it is making a dead man who could not walk in the right way, walk in the right way ever afterwards! “The lepers are cleansed.” Ah, but to cleanse a *sinner* is greater work than cleansing a leper! “The deaf hear.” Yes, and to make a man who never listened to the voice of God, hear the voice of his Maker is a miracle greater than to make the deaf hear, or even to raise the dead! Great though that is, it is not a more stupendous effort of divine power than to save a soul since men are naturally dead in sins and must be quickened by divine grace if they are saved. To gospelize a man is the highest instance of divine might and remains an unparalleled miracle, a miracle of miracles! “The poor are evangelized.”

Beloved, there have been some very precious specimens of poor people who have come under the influence of the gospel. I think I appeal to the hearts of all of you who are now present, when I say there is nothing we more reverence and respect than the piety of the poor and needy. I had an engraving sent to me the other day which pleased me beyond measure. It was an engraving simply but exquisitely executed. It represented a poor girl in an upper room, with a lean-to roof. There was a post driven in the ground, on which was a piece of wood. Standing on the table were a candle and a Bible. She was on her knees at a chair, praying; wrestling with God. Everything in the room had on it the stamp of poverty. There was the mean coverlet to the old stump bedstead. There were the walls that had never been papered and perhaps scarcely whitewashed. It was an upper story to which she had climbed with aching knees and where, perhaps, she had worked away till her fingers were worn to the bone to earn her bread at needlework. There it was that she was wrestling with God. Some would turn away and laugh at it. But it appeals to the best feelings of man and moves the heart far more than does the fine engraving of the monarch on his knees in the grand assembly! We have had lately a most excellent volume, the *Life of Captain Hedley Vicars*. It is calculated to do great good and I pray God to bless it. But I question whether the history of Captain Hedley Vicars will last as long in the public mind as the history of the Dairyman’s Daughter, or the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain. The histories of those who have come from the ranks of the poor always lay hold of the Christian mind. Oh, we love piety anywhere! We bless God where coronets and divine grace go together, but if

piety in any place does more brightly than anywhere else, it is in rags and poverty! When the poor woman in the almshouse takes her bread and her water and blesses God for truth—when the poor creature who has not where to lay his head, yet lifts his eye and says, “My Father will provide,” it is then like the glowworm in the damp leaves, a spark more conspicuous for the blackness around it! Then religion gleams in its true brightness and is seen in all its luster. It is a mark of Christ’s gospel that the poor are evangelized—that they can receive the gospel! True it is, the gospel affects all ranks and is equally adapted to them all, but yet we say, “If one class is more prominent than another, we believe that in Holy Scripture the poor are most of all appealed to.” “Oh,” say some very often, “the converts whom God has given to such a man are all from the lower ranks, they are all people with no sense! They are all uneducated people that hear such-and-such a person.” Very well, if you say so; we might deny it if we pleased, but we do not know that we shall take the trouble, because we think it no disgrace whatever. We think it rather to be an honor that the poor are gospelized, and that they listen to the gospel from our lips. I have never thought it a disgrace at any time! When any have said, “Look, what a mass of uneducated people they are”; yes, I have thought, and blessed be God they are, for those are the very people that need the gospel most! If you saw a physician’s door surrounded by a number of ladies of the sentimental school who are sick about three times a week, and never were ill at all—if it were said he cured them, you would say, “No great wonder too, for there never was anything the matter with them.” But if you heard of another man, that people with the worst diseases have come to him and that God has made use of him and his medicine has been the means of healing their diseases, you would then say, “There is something in it, for the people that need it most have received it.” If then, it is true that the poor will come to hear the gospel more than others, it is no disgrace to the gospel; it is an honor to it; that those who most need it do freely receive it!

III. And now I must close up by briefly dwelling on the last point. It was the third translation, WYCLIFFE’S TRANSLATION. To give it to you in old English—“Poor men are taking to the preaching of the gospel.” “Ah,” say some, “they had better remain at home, minding their plows or their blacksmith’s hammer. They had better have kept on with their tinkering and tailoring and not have turned preachers.” But it is one of the honors of the gospel that poor men have taken to the preaching of it! There was once a tinker and let the worldly-wise blush when they hear of it—there was once a tinker, a tinker of whom a great divine said he would give all his learning if he could preach like he did. There was once a tinker who never so much as brushed his back against the walls of a college, who wrote a *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Did ever a doctor in divinity write such a book? There was once a pot-boy—a boy who carried on his back

the pewter pots for his mother, who kept the Old Bell. That man drove men mad, as the world had it—but led them to Christ, as we have it—all his life long until loaded with honors, he sank into his grave, with the goodwill of a multitude round about him! With an imperishable name written in the world's records, as well as in the records of the church! Did you ever hear of any mighty man, whose name stood in more esteem among God's people than the name of George Whitefield? And yet these were poor men, who, as Wycliffe said, were taking to the preaching of the gospel! If you will read the life of Wycliffe, you will find him saying, that he believed that the Reformation in England was more promoted by the labors of the poor men whom he sent out from Lutterworth than by his own. He gathered round him a number of the poor people whom he instructed in the faith, and then he sent them two and two into every village, as Jesus did. They went into the marketplace, and they gathered the people around. They opened the book and read a chapter and then they left them a manuscript of it. And for months and years after, the people would assemble to read that manuscript and would remember the gospellers who had come to tell them the gospel of Christ! These men went from marketplace to marketplace, from town to town and from village to village—and though their names are unknown to fame, they were the real reformers! You may talk of Cranmer and Latimer and Ridley—they did much—but the real reformers of the English nation were people whose names have perished from the annals of time but are written in the records of eternity! God has blessed the poor man in preaching His truth!

Far be it from me to depreciate learning and wisdom. We would not have had the Bible translated without learning, and the more learning a man can have, if he is a sanctified man, the better! He has so many more talents to lay out in his Master's service. But it is not absolutely necessary for preaching of the word. Rough, untamed, untaught energy has done much in the church. A Boanerges has stood up in a village. He could not put three words together in grammatical English. But where the drowsy parson had for many a year lulled all his people into an unhallowed rest, this man started up, like the herdsman Amos, and brought about a great awakening! He began to preach in some cottage. People thronged around him. Then a house was built and his name is handed down to us as the Reverend So-and-So, but then he was known as Tom the plowman, or John the tinker! God has made use of men whose origin was the most obscure, who seemed to have little except the gifts of nature which could be made use of in God's service. And we hold that this is no disgrace but, on the contrary, an honor that poor men are taking to preaching the gospel!

I have to ask you, this morning, to help some poor men in preaching the gospel. We are constantly receiving letters from our poor brothers,

and it is very seldom that we say, “No,” to their appeals for assistance. But we must do so, unless our friends, more especially those who love the gospel, will really do something towards the maintenance of God’s faithful servants. I have, during the past year, preached many times for ministers on this basis—that they could not live unless some preached a sermon and made a collection for them. In some places the population was so small that they could not maintain their minister and in others it was a new movement and therefore, they were unable to support him. Some of you subscribe to the Church Pastoral Aid Society. That is a very excellent society, but I never could see any good in it. There are many poor clergy in the Church of England who need assistance bad enough. But if you want to know the right way of keeping poor curates, I will tell you—split a bishop up into 50, and that will do it! If that could be done at once and speedily, there would be no need of Pastoral Aid Societies! You will say, perhaps, “Let such a thing be done in our denomination.” I answer that we have no bishops with whom such a thing could be done. I believe there is not to be found one minister in the whole Baptist denomination whose salary has ever exceeded £600, and there are only three, I believe, who receive as much as that, of which I am *not* one. And these three men are in such a position that their demands are great, and they have not one penny too much, while the great mass of our denomination receive £20, £30, £40, £50, £60 and so on, but below £100. The sum collected today will be given to those whose incomes are below £80, and whose needs are great.

And now, beloved, I have opened my mouth for the dumb, and pleaded the cause of the poor, let me end by entreating the poor of the flock to consider the poor man’s Christ. Let me urge them to give Him their thoughts, and may the Lord enable them to yield Him their hearts! “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who believes not shall be damned.”

May God bless the high and low, the rich and poor. Yes, all of you, for His name’s sake!

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WHY ARE MEN SAVED?

NO. 115

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING,
FEBRUARY 1, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake.”
Psalm 106:8.***

IN looking upon the works of God in creation, there are two questions which at once occur to the thoughtful mind and which must be answered before we can procure a clue to the philosophy and science of creation itself. The first one is the question of authorship: Who made all these things? And the next question is that of design: For what purpose were all these things created? The first question, “Who made all these things?” is one which is easily answered by a man who has an honest conscience and a sane mind, for when he lifts his eyes up yonder to read the stars, he will see those stars spell out in golden letters this word—GOD. And when he looks below upon the waves, if his ears are honestly opened, he will hear each wave proclaiming, *GOD*. If he looks to the summits of the mountains, they will not speak, but with a dignified answer of silence they seem to say—

“The hand that made us is Divine.”

If we listen to the rippling of the stream at the mountainside, to the tumbling of the avalanche, to the lowing of the cattle, to the singing of the birds, to every voice and sound of nature, we shall hear this answer to the question, “God is our Maker. He has made us, and not we, ourselves.”

The next question, as to design—Why were these things made?—is not as easy to answer, apart from Scripture. But when we look at Scripture, we discover this fact—that as the answer to the first question is God, so the answer to the second question is the same! Why were these things made? The answer is, for God’s glory, for His honor and for His pleasure. No other answer can be consistent with reason. Whatever other replies men may propound, no other can be really sound. If they will, for one moment, consider that there was a time when God had no creatures—when He dwelt alone, the mighty Maker of ages, glorious in an uncreated solitude, divine in His eternal loneliness—“I Am and there is none beside Me”—can anyone answer this question—Why did God make creatures to

exist?—in any other way than by answering it thus—“He made them for His own pleasure and for His own glory.” You may say He made them for His creatures. But we answer, there were, then, no creatures to make them for! We admit that the answer may be a sound one *now*. God makes the harvest for His creatures. He hangs the sun in the firmament to bless His creatures with light and sunshine. He bids the moon walk in her course by night to cheer the darkness of His creatures upon earth. But the first answer, going back to the origin of all things, can be nothing else than this—“For His pleasure they are and were erected.” “He made all things for Himself and by Himself.”

Now, this which holds good in the works of creation, holds equally good in the works of salvation. Lift up your eyes on high—higher than those stars which glimmer on the floor of heaven! Look up where spirits in white—clearer than light—reflect yon stars in their magnificence! Look there, where the redeemed with their choral symphonies “circle the throne of God rejoicing” and ask this question—“Who saved those glorified beings and for what purpose were they saved?” We tell you that the same answer must be given as we have previously given to the former question—“*He* saved them—He saved them for His name’s sake!” The text is an answer to the two great questions concerning salvation—Who saved men and why are they saved? “He saved them for His name’s sake.”

Into this subject I shall endeavor to look this morning. May God make it profitable to each of us and may we be found among the number who shall be saved “for His name’s sake.” Treating the text verbally—and that is the way most will understand—here are four things. First, *a glorious Savior*—“He saved them.” Secondly, *a favored people*—“He saved them.” Thirdly, *a divine reason why He saved them*—“for His name’s sake.” And fourthly, *an obstruction conquered*, in the word, “nevertheless,” implying that there was some difficulty that was removed. “Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake.” A Savior. The saved. The reason. The obstruction removed.

I. First, then, here is A GLORIOUS SAVIOR—“*He* saved them.” Who is to be understood by that pronoun, “He”? Possibly many of my hearers may answer, “Why, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of men.” Right, my Friends. But not all the truth. Jesus Christ is the Savior. But not more so than God the Father, or God the Holy Spirit! Some persons who are ignorant of the system of divine truth think of God the Father as being a great being full of wrath and anger and justice but having no love. They think of God the Spirit, perhaps, as a mere *influence* proceeding from the Father and the Son. Now nothing can be more incorrect than such opinions! It is true the Son redeems me, but the Father gave the

Son to die for me and the Father chose me in the everlasting election of His grace. The Father blots out my sin, the Father accepts me and adopts me into His family through Christ. The Son could not save without the Father any more than the Father without the Son! And as for the Holy Spirit, if the Son redeems, don't you know that the Holy Spirit regenerates? It is He who makes us new creatures in Christ, who begets us, again, unto a lively hope, who purifies our soul, who sanctifies our spirit and who, at last, presents us spotless and faultless before the throne of the Most High, accepted in the beloved. When you say, "Savior," remember there is a Trinity in that word—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—this Savior being three persons under one name! You cannot be saved by the Son without the Father, nor by the Father without the Son, nor by Father and Son without the Spirit. But as they are one in creation, so are they one in salvation working together in one God for our salvation, and unto that God be glory everlasting, world without end. Amen.

But, note here, how this divine being claims salvation wholly to Himself. "Nevertheless HE saved them." But, Moses, where are you? Did you not save them, Moses? You stretched the rod over the sea and it divided in halves. You lifted up your prayer to heaven and the frogs came and the flies swarmed and the water was turned into blood and the hail smote the land of Egypt. Were not you their Savior, Moses? And you Aaron, didn't you offer the bullocks which God accepted, didn't you lead them, with Moses, through the wilderness? Were not *you* their Savior? They answer, "No, we were the *instruments*, but He saved them. God made use of us but unto His name be all the glory and none unto ourselves." But, Israel, you defeated a strong and mighty people—did not you save yourself? Perhaps it was by your own holiness that the Red Sea was dried up. Perhaps the parted floods were frightened at the piety of the saints that stood upon their banks. Perhaps it was Israel that delivered itself. No, no, says God's word. *He saved them*. They did not save themselves, nor did their fellow men redeem them. And yet, mark you, there are some who dispute this point—who think that men save themselves, or, at least—that priests and preachers can help to do it! We say that the preacher, under God, may be the *instrument* of arresting man's attention, of warning him and awakening him. But the preacher is nothing! God is everything! The mightiest eloquence that ever distilled from the lips of a seraphic preacher is nothing apart from God's Holy Spirit! Neither Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas, are *anyone*—God gave the increase, and God must have all the glory. There are some we meet with here and there who say, "I am a convert of Mr. So-and-So. I am a convert

of the Rev. Dr. This-or-That.” Well, if you are, sir, I cannot give you much hope of heaven—only God’s converts go there! Not proselytes of man, but the redeemed of the Lord! Oh, it is very little to convert a man to our own opinions, but it is really something to be the means of converting him to the Lord our God! I had a letter some time ago from a good Baptist minister in Ireland who very much wanted me to come over to Ireland as he said, to represent the Baptist interest, because it was low, and perhaps, it might lead the people to think a little more of Baptists. I told him I would not go across the street merely to do that, much less would I cross the Irish Channel! I would not *think* of going to Ireland for that! But if I might go there to make Christians under God and be the means of bringing men to Christ, I would leave it to them what they would be afterwards and trust to God’s Holy Spirit to direct and guide them as to what denomination they should consider nearest akin to God’s truth. Brothers and sisters, I might make all of you Baptists, perhaps, and yet you would be none the better for it! I might convert you all in that way, but such a conversion would be that you would be washed to greater stains, converted into hypocrites and not into saints! I have seen something of wholesale conversions. Great revivalists have risen up. They have preached thundering sermons that have made men’s knees knock together. “What a wonderful man!” people have said. “He has converted so many under one sermon.” But look for his converts in a month and where will they be? You will see some of them in the alehouse, you will hear others of them swear, you will find many of them rogues and cheats, because they were not *God’s converts* but only man’s! Brethren, if the work is done at all, it must be done of God, for if God does not convert, there is nothing done that shall last and nothing that shall be of any use for eternity!

But some reply, “Well, sir, but men convert themselves.” Yes, they do and a fine conversion it is. Very frequently they convert themselves, but then that which man did, man undoes. He who converts himself one day, unconverts himself the next! He ties a knot which his own fingers can loosen. Remember this—you may convert yourselves a dozen times over, but, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh”, and “cannot see the kingdom of God.” It is only “that which is born of the Spirit” that “is Spirit,” and is, therefore, able to be gathered at last into the spirit-realm where only spiritual things can be found before the throne of the Most High. We must reserve this prerogative wholly to God! If any man states that God is not Creator, we call him infidel. But if any man entrenches upon this doctrine, that God is the absolute Maker of all things—we hiss him down in a moment! An infidel of the worst kind, he is more bold who tells men

that they may convert themselves whereas God does it all. “He” only, the great Jehovah—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and “He saved them for His name’s sake.”

Thus have I endeavored to clearly set out the first truth of the divine and glorious Savior.

II. Now, secondly, THE FAVORED PERSONS—“He saved *them*.” Who are they? You will reply, “They were the most respectable people that could be found in the world. They were a very prayerful, loving, holy and deserving people. And, therefore, because they were good, He saved them.” Very well, that is your opinion—I will tell you what Moses says—“Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt, they remembered not the multitudes of Your mercies, but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Nevertheless He saved them.” Look at the 7th verse and you will have their character. In the first place, they were a stupid people—“Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt.” In the next place, they were an ungrateful people—“they remembered not the multitude of Your mercies.” In the third place, they were a provoking people—“they provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.” Ah, these are the people whom free grace saved! These are the men, and these the women whom the God of all grace condescends to take to His bosom and to make anew!

Note, first, *that they were a stupid people*. God sends His gospel not always to the wise and prudent but unto fools—

**“He takes the fool and makes him know
The wonders of His dying love.”**

Do not suppose, my hearer, because you are very unlettered and can scarcely read—do not imagine because you have always been brought up in extreme ignorance and have scarcely learned to spell your name that, therefore, you cannot be saved! God’s grace can save you and then enlighten you! A brother minister once told me a story of a man who was known in a certain village as a simpleton, and was always considered to be soft in the head. No one thought he could ever understand anything. But one day he came to hear the gospel preached. He had been a drunken fellow having wit enough to be wicked which is a very common kind of wit. The Lord was pleased to bless the word to his soul so that he became a changed character. And what was the marvel of all was his religion gave him something which began to develop his latent faculties! He found he had something to live for and he began to try what he could do. In the first place, he wanted to read his Bible that he might read his Savior’s name. And after much hammering and spelling away, at last he was able to read a chapter. Then he was asked to pray at a prayer meeting. Here

was an exercise of his vocal powers. Five or six words made up his prayer, and down he sat! But by continually praying in his own family at home, he came to pray like the rest of the brothers and sisters, and he went on till he became a preacher! And, singularly enough, he suddenly had a depth of understanding, and a power of thought such as are seldom found among ministers who only occasionally occupy pulpits! Strange it was that grace should tend to develop his natural powers; giving him an objective; setting him devoutly and firmly upon it, and so bringing out all his resources that they were fully shown. Ah, ignorant ones, you need not despair! He saved them! Not for their sakes—there was nothing in them why they should be saved. He saved them not for their wisdom's sake, but, ignorant though they were; and understanding not the meaning of His miracles, "He saved them for His name's sake."

Note, again, *they were a very ungrateful people* and yet He saved them. He delivered them times without number and worked mighty miracles for them, but they still rebelled. Ah, that is like you, my hearer. You have had many deliverances from the borders of the grave. God has given you house and food day after day and provided for you and kept you to this hour. But how ungrateful you have been! As Isaiah wrote, "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib, but My people do not know, Israel does not consider." How many there are of this character, who have favors from God, the history of which they could not give in a year, but yet what have they ever done for Him? They would not keep a horse that did not work for them, nor as much as a dog that would not notice them. But here is God. He has kept them day by day and they have done a great deal *against* Him, but they have done nothing *for* Him. He has put the bread into their very mouths, nurtured them and sustained their strength—and they have spent their strength in defying Him, in cursing His name and breaking His Sabbath! "Nevertheless He saved them." Some of this sort have been saved—I hope I have some here now who will be saved by conquering grace, made new men and women by the mighty power of God's Spirit. "Nevertheless He saved them." When there was nothing to recommend them, but every reason why they should be cast away for their ingratitude, "Nevertheless He saved them."

And note, once more, *they were a provoking people*—"They provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." Ah, how many people there are in this world who are a provoking people to God! If God were like man, who among us would be here today? If we are provoked once or twice, up goes the fist! With some men, their passion stirs at the very first offense. Others who are somewhat more placid will bear offense after offense, till at last they say, "There is an end to everything and I can bear that no long-

er. You must stop it, or else I must stop you!” Ah, if God had that temper, where would we be? Well might He say, “My thoughts are not as your thoughts. I am God, I change not, or else you sons of Jacob had been consumed.” They were a provoking people, “Nevertheless He saved them.” Have you provoked Him? Take heart! If you repent, God has promised to save you! And what is more, He may, this morning, give you repentance, and even give you remission of sins—for He saves provoking people for His name’s sake! I hear one of my hearers say—“Well, sir, that is encouraging sin with a vengeance!” Is it, indeed, sir! Why? “Because you are talking to the very worst of men, and you are saying that they may yet be saved!” Pray tell, sirs, when I spoke to the worst of men, did I speak to *you* or not? You say, “No. I am one of the most respectable and best of men.” Well then, sir, I have no need to preach to you, for you think you do not need any. “The whole have no need of a physician, but they who are sick.” But these poor people, whom you say I am encouraging in sin, need to be spoken to. I will leave you. Good morning to you! You keep to your own gospel and I wonder whether you will find your way to heaven by it! No, I do not wonder—I know you will not unless you are brought as a poor sinner to take Christ at His word and be saved for His name’s sake! But I say farewell to you, and I will keep on in my course. Why did you say I encourage men in sin? I encourage them to turn from it! I did not say He saved the provoking people, and then let them still provoke Him as they had done before. I did not say He saved the wicked people, and then let them sin as they did before. You know the meaning of the word, “saved.” I explained it the other morning. The word, “saved,” does not mean merely taking men to heaven—it means more—it means saving them from their sin! It means giving them a new heart, new spirits, new lives. It means making them into new men. Is there anything licentious in saying that Christ takes the worst of men to make them into saints? If there is, I cannot see it. I only wish He would take the worst of this congregation and make them into the saints of the living God, and *then* there would be far less licentiousness! Sinner, I comfort you. Not in your sin, but in your repentance! Sinner, the saints of heaven were once as bad as you have been. Are you a drunk, a swearer, an unclean person? “Such were some of them. But they have been washed: but they have been sanctified.” Is your robe black? Ask them whether their robes were ever black? They will tell you, “Yes, we have washed our robes.” If they had been black, they would not have needed washing. “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Then, sinner, if they were black and were saved, why not yourself?—

***“Are not His mercies rich and free?
Then say, my soul, why not for thee?
Our Jesus died upon the tree,
Then why, my soul, why not for thee?”***

Take heart, penitents—God will have mercy on you! “Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake.”

III. Now we come to the third point—THE REASON OF SALVATION—“He saved them for His name’s sake.” There is no other reason why God should save a man but for His name’s sake. There is nothing in a sinner which can entitle him to salvation, or recommend him to mercy. It must be God’s own heart which must dictate the motive why men are to be saved. One person says, “God will save me because I am so upright.” Sir, He will do no such thing! Says another, “God will save me because I am so talented.” Sir, he will not. *Your talent?* Why you driveling, self-conceited idiot—your talent is nothing compared with that of the angel that once stood before the throne of God! They sinned and were cast into the bottomless pit forever! If He would save men for their talent, He would have saved Satan, for he had talents enough. As for your morality and goodness, it is but filthy rags and He will never save you for anything you do! None of us would ever be saved if God expected anything of us—we must be saved purely and solely for reasons connected with Himself and lying in His own bosom! Blessed be His name, He saves us for “His name’s sake.” What does that mean? I think it means this—the name of God is His person, His attributes and His nature. For His nature’s sake, for His very attributes’ sake, He saved men, and perhaps we may also include this—“My name is in Him”—that is, in Christ. He saves us for the sake of Christ, who is the name of God. And what does that mean? I think it means this—

He saved them, first, that He might manifest His nature. God was all love and He wanted to manifest it. He showed it when He made the sun, the moon and the stars and scattered flowers over the green and laughing earth. He showed His love when He made the air balmy to the body and the sunshine cheering to the eye. He gives us warmth even in winter, by the clothing and by the fuel which He has stored in the heart of the earth, but He wanted to reveal Himself still more. “How can I show them that I love them with all My infinite heart? I will give My Son to die to save the very worst of them and so I will manifest My nature.” And God has done it—He has manifested His power, His justice, His love, His faithfulness and His truth. He has manifested His whole self on the great platform of salvation! It was, so to speak, the balcony on which God stepped to show Himself to man—the balcony of salvation—here it is He manifests Himself by saving men’s souls!

He did it, again, to vindicate His name. Some say God is cruel. They wickedly call Him a tyrant. “Ah,” says God, “but I will save the worst of sinners and vindicate My name. I will blot out the stigma. I will remove the slur. They shall not be able to say that, unless they are filthy liars, for I will be abundantly merciful. I will take away this stain and they shall see that My great name is a name of love.” And said He, again, “I will do this for My name’s sake, that is, to make these people love My name. I know if I take the best of men and save them, they will love My name. But if I take the worst of men, oh, how they will love Me! If I go and take some of the offscouring of the earth and make them My children, oh, how they will love Me! Then they will cleave to My name—they will think it more sweet than music. It will be more precious to them than the spikenard of the Eastern merchants. They will value it as gold, yes, as much fine gold. The man who loves Me best is the man who has most sins forgiven—he owes much, therefore he will love much.” This is the reason why God often selects the worst of men to make them His. Says an old writer, “All the carvings of heaven were made out of knots—the temple of God is a cedar one but the cedars were all knotty trees before He cut them down.” He chose the worst that He might display His workmanship and His skill, to make unto Himself a name. As it is written, “It shall be unto Me for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” Now, dear hearers, of whatever class you are, here is something I have to offer well worthy of your consideration, namely—that if saved, we are saved for the sake of God, for His name’s sake and not for our own!

Now this puts all men on a level with regard to salvation. Suppose that in coming into this garden, the rule had been that everyone must make mention of my name as the key of admittance? The law is that no man is to be admitted for his rank or title but only by the use of a certain name. Up comes a lord. He makes use of the name and comes in. Up comes a beggar, all in patches. He makes use of the name—the law says it is only the use of the name that will admit you—he makes use of it and he enters, for there is no distinction. So, my lady, if you come, with all your morality, you must make use of His name—if you come, poor filthy inhabitant of a cellar or an attic—and make use of His name, the doors will fly wide open, for there is salvation for everyone who makes mention of the name of Christ and for none other! This pulls down the pride of the moralist, abases the self-exaltation of the self-righteous and puts us all, as guilty sinners, on an equal footing before God to receive mercy at His hands! “For His name’s sake,” and for that reason alone.

IV. I have detained you too long. Let me close by noticing obstacles removed, in the word, “nevertheless.” I shall do that in somewhat of an interesting form, by way of parable.

Once upon a time, Mercy sat upon her snow-white throne, surrounded by the troops of love. A sinner was brought before her, whom Mercy designed to save. The herald blew the trumpet, and after three blasts thereof, with a loud voice, he said, “O heaven and earth and hell, I summon you this day to come before the throne of Mercy, to tell why this sinner should not be saved.” There stood the sinner trembling with fear. He knew that there were multitudes of opponents who would press into the hall of Mercy and with eyes full of wrath, would say, “He must not and he shall not escape. He must be lost!” The trumpet was blown, and Mercy sat placidly on her throne until there stepped in one with a fiery countenance. His head was covered with light; he spoke with a voice like thunder, and out of his eyes flashed lightning. “Who are you?” said Mercy. He replied, “I am Law. The law of God.” “And what have you to say?” “I have this to say,” and he lifted up a stony tablet, written on both sides. “These ten commands, this wretch has broken! My demand is blood, for it is written, ‘The soul that sins, it shall die.’ He must die, or justice must.” The wretch trembles, his knees knock together, the marrow of his bones melts within him as if they were foes dissolved by fire! He shakes with very fright. Already he thought he saw the thunderbolt launched at him! He thought he saw the lightning penetrate into his soul! Hell yawned before him in imagination, and he thought himself cast away forever! But Mercy smiled and said, “Law, I will answer you. This wretch deserves to die. Justice demands that he should perish—I award you your claim.” And oh, how the sinner trembles! But he pleads, “But there is one yonder who has come with me today; my king, my Lord; His name is Jesus; He will tell you how the debt can be paid, and I can go free.” Then Jesus spoke and said, “O Mercy, I will do your bidding. Take Me, Law; put Me in a garden; make Me sweat drops of blood; then nail me to a tree; scourge my back before you put me to death; hang me on the cross; let blood run from my hands and feet; let me descend into the grave; let me pay all the sinner owes; I will die in his place!” And the Law went out and scourged the Savior, nailed Him to the cross, and coming back with his face all bright with satisfaction, stood again at the throne of Mercy, and Mercy said, “Law, what have you now to say?” “Nothing,” he said, “fair angel, nothing.” “What? Not one of these commands against him?” “No, not one. Jesus, his substitute, has kept them all—has paid the penalty for his disobedience, and now, instead of his condemnation, I demand as a debt of justice that he be acquitted.” “Stand you here,” said Mercy, “sit

on my throne. I and you together will now send forth another summons." The trumpet rang again. "Come here, all you who have anything to say against this sinner, why he should not be acquitted"; and up comes another—one who often troubled the sinner—one who had a voice not as loud as that of the Law, but still piercing and thrilling—a voice whose whispers were like the cuttings of a dagger. "Who are you?" says Mercy. "I am Conscience; this sinner must be punished! He has done so much against the law of God that he must be punished. I demand it, and I will give him no rest till he is punished, nor even then, for I will follow him even to the grave, and persecute him after death with unutterable pangs." "No," said Mercy, "Hear me," and while Conscience paused for a moment, she took a bunch of hyssop and sprinkled Conscience with the blood, saying, "Hear me, Conscience, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleans us from all sin. Now have you anything to say?" "No," said Conscience, "nothing."—

***'Covered is his unrighteousness;
From condemnation he is free.'***

"Henceforth I will not grieve him. I will be a good conscience unto him, through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The trumpet rang a third time, and growling from the innermost vaults, up there came a grim black fiend with hate in his eyes, and hellish majesty on his brows! He is asked, "Have you anything against that sinner?" "Yes," he said, "I have; he has made a league with hell, and a covenant with the grave, and here it is signed with his own hand! He asked God to destroy his soul in a drunken fit, and vowed he would never turn to God. See, here is his covenant with hell!" "Let us look at it," said Mercy; and it was handed up, while the grim fiend looked at the sinner, and pierced him through with his black looks. "Ah, but," said Mercy, "this man had no right to sign the deed. A man must not sign away another's property; this man was bought and paid for long beforehand; he is not his own! The covenant with death is annulled, and the league with hell is torn in pieces. Go your way Satan!" "No," said he, howling again, "I have something else to say—that man was always my friend; he always listened to my insinuations; he scoffed at the gospel; he scorned the majesty of heaven. Is he to be pardoned while I repair to my hellish den, forever to bear the penalty of guilt?" Said Mercy, "Depart, you fiend. These things he did in the days of his unregeneracy, but this word, *'nevertheless,'* blots them out! Go to your hell—take this for another lash upon yourself—the sinner shall be pardoned but you, never, treacherous fiend!" And then Mercy, smilingly turned to the sinner, and said, "Sinner, the trumpet must be blown for the last time!" Again it was

blown, and no one answered; then the sinner stood up, and Mercy said, "Sinner ask yourself the question—*you* ask of heaven, of earth, of hell—can any condemn you?" And the sinner stood up, and with a bold loud voice said, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And he looked into hell and Satan lay there, biting his iron bonds; and he looked on earth, and earth was silent. And in the majesty of faith, the sinner did even climb to heaven itself, and he said, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God?" And the answer came, "No. He justifies!" "Christ?" Sweetly it was whispered, "No. He died." Then turning round, the sinner joyfully exclaimed, "Who shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" And the once condemned sinner came back to Mercy; prostrate at her feet he lay, and vowed henceforth to be hers forever if she would keep him to the end, and make him what she would desire him to be. Then no longer did the trumpet ring, but angels rejoiced, and heaven was glad, for the sinner was saved!

Thus, you see, I have what is called, *dramatized the thing*; but I don't care what it is called. It is a way of arresting the ear, when nothing else will. "Nevertheless." There is the obstruction taken away! Sinner, whatever is the "nevertheless," it shall never the less abate the Savior's love! Not the less shall it ever make it, but it shall remain the same—

***"Come, guilty soul and flee away
To Christ and heal your wounds!
This is the glorious gospel-day
Wherein free grace abounds!
Come to Jesus, sinner, come."***

On your knees weep out a sorrowful confession; look to His cross and see the substitute; believe, and live! You almost demons, you that have gone farthest in sin, now, EVEN NOW, Jesus says, "If you know your need of Me, turn unto Me, and I will have mercy upon you, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

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SECRET SINS

NO. 116

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 8, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“Cleanse You me from secret faults.”
Psalm 19:12.*

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS arises partly from pride but mainly from ignorance of God’s law. It is because men know little or nothing concerning the terrible character of the divine law that they foolishly imagine themselves to be righteous. They are not aware of the deep spirituality and the stern severity of the law or they would have other and wiser notions. Once let them know how strictly the law deals with the thoughts, how it brings itself to bear upon every emotion of the inner man—and there is not one creature beneath God’s heaven who would dare to think himself self-righteous in God’s sight in virtue of his own deeds and thoughts! Only let the law of God be truly revealed to a man, let him know how strict the law is and how infinitely just—and his self-righteousness will shrivel into nothing! It will become a filthy rag in his sight—whereas before he thought it to be a goodly garment!

Now, David, having seen God’s law and having praised it in this Psalm, which I have read in your hearing, is brought by reflecting on its excellency, to utter this thought, “Who can understand his errors?” and then to offer this prayer, “Cleanse You me from secret faults.”

In the Lateran Council of the church of Rome, a decree was passed that every true believer must confess his sins, all of them, once each year to a priest, and they affixed to it this declaration—that there is no hope of pardon but in complying with that decree. What can equal the absurdity of such a decree as that? Do they suppose that they can tell their sins as easily as they can count their fingers? Why, if we could receive pardon for all our sins by telling every sin we have committed in one hour, there is not one of us who would be able to enter heaven! Besides the sins that are known to us and that we may be able to confess, there are a vast mass of sins which are as truly sins as those which we observe but which are secret and come not beneath our eyes! Oh if we had eyes like those of God, we would think very differently of ourselves. The sins that we see and confess are but like the farmer’s small samples which he brings to market when he has left his granary full at home. We have but a very few sins which we can observe and detect, compared with those

which are hidden to ourselves and unseen by our fellow creatures! I doubt not it is true of all of us who are here that in every hour of our existence in which we are active, we commit tens of thousands of sins for which conscience has never reproved us because we have never seen them to be wrong, seeing we have not studied God's laws as we ought to have done! Now, be it known to us all that sin is sin, whether we see it or not—that a sin secret to us is a sin as truly as if we knew it to be a sin, though not as great a sin in the sight of God as if it had been committed presumptuously, seeing that it lacks the aggravation of willfulness. Let all of us who know our sins offer this prayer after all our confessions—“Lord, I have confessed as many as I know, but I must add an etcetera after them and say, ‘Cleanse You me from secret faults.’”

That, however, will not be the essence of my sermon this morning. I am going after a certain class of men who have sins not unknown to themselves but secret to their fellow creatures. Every now and then we turn up a fair stone which lies upon the green turf of the professing church, surrounded with the verdure of apparent goodness and, to our astonishment, we find beneath it all kinds of filthy insects and loathsome reptiles! And in our disgust at such hypocrisy, we are driven to exclaim, “All men are liars! There are none in whom we can put any trust at all!” It is not fair to say so of all, but really, the discoveries which are made of the insincerity of our fellow creatures are enough to make us despise our kind because they can go so far in appearances and yet have so little soundness of heart. To you, sirs, who sin secretly and yet make a profession—you who break God's covenants in the dark and wear a mask of goodness in the light—to you, sirs, who shut the doors and commit wickedness in secret—to you I shall speak this morning! O may God also be pleased to speak to you and make you pray this prayer—“Cleanse You me from secret faults.”

I shall endeavor to urge upon all pretenders present to give up, to renounce, to detest, to hate, to abhor all their secret sins! And, first, I shall endeavor to show the *folly of secret sins*. Secondly, *the misery of secret sins*. Thirdly, *the guilt of secret sins*. Fourthly, *the danger of secret sins*. And then I shall try to apply some words by way of remedy—that we may all of us be enabled to avoid secret sins.

I. First, then, THE FOLLY OF SECRET SINS.

pretender, you are fair to look upon. Your conduct is outwardly upright, amiable, liberal, generous and Christian. But you indulge in some sin which the eyes of man have not yet detected. Perhaps it is private drunkenness. You revile the drunk when he staggers through the street. But you can, yourself, indulge in the same habit in private. It may be some other lust or vice. It is not for me, just now, to mention what it is.

But, pretender, we say unto you, you are a fool to think of harboring a secret sin and you are a fool for this one reason—that your sin is *not* a secret sin—it is *known* and shall one day be revealed. Perhaps very soon! Your sin is not a secret. The eyes of God have seen it. You have sinned before His face. You have shut the door and drawn the curtains and kept out the eye of the sun, but God's eyes pierce through the darkness. The brick walls which surrounded you were as transparent as glass to the eyes of the Almighty! The darkness which did gird you was as bright as the summer's noon to the eyes of Him who beholds all things. Know you not, O man, that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do?" As the priest ran his knife into the entrails of his victim, discovered the heart and liver and what else did lie within, so are you, O man, seen by God! Cut open by the Almighty, you have no secret chamber where you can hide yourself. You have no dark cellar where you can conceal your soul. Dig deep, yes, deep as hell, but you cannot find earth enough upon the globe to cover your sin! If you should heap the mountains on its grave, those mountains would tell the tale of what was buried in their bowels. If you could cast your sin into the sea, a thousand babbling waves would tell the secret! There is no hiding it from God! Your sin is photographed in high heaven. The deed, when it was done, was photographed upon the sky and there it shall remain and you shall see yourself, one day, revealed to the gazing eyes of all men, a hypocrite, a pretender, who did sin in fancied secret, observed in all your acts by the all-seeing Jehovah!

O what fools men are, to think they can do anything in secret! This world is like the glass hives wherein bees sometimes work—we look down upon them and we see all the operations of the little creatures. So God looks down and sees all our eyes are weak. We cannot look through the darkness but His eyes, like orbs of fire, penetrate the blackness and reads the thought of man and sees his acts when he thinks himself most concealed! Oh, it were a thought enough to curb us from all sin, if it were truly applied to us—"You, God, see me!" Stop thief! Drop that which you have taken! God sees you! No eyes of detection on earth have discovered you, but God's eyes are now looking through the clouds upon you! Swearer! Though none at whom you swore heard your oath, God heard it! It entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. And those who lead a filthy life and yet are respectable among men—your vices are all known—they are written in God's book. He keeps a diary of all your acts. And what will you think on that day when a crowd shall be assembled, compared with which this immense multitude is but a drop in a bucket, and God shall read out the story of your secret life and men and angels shall hear it? Certain I am there are none of us who would like to have all

our secrets read, especially our secret thoughts. If I should select out of this congregation the most holy man. If I should bring him forward and say, "Now, sir, I know all your thoughts and am about to tell them," I am sure he would offer me the largest bribe that he could gather if I would be pleased to conceal at least some of them! "Tell," he would say, "of my *acts*—of them I am not ashamed. But do not tell my thoughts and imaginations—of them I must ever stand ashamed before God." What, then, sinner, will be your shame when your private lusts, your closet transgressions, your secret crimes shall be heralded from God's throne, proclaimed by His own mouth and with a voice louder than a thousand thunders preached in the ears of an assembled world? What will be your terror and confusion, then, when all the deeds you have done shall be proclaimed in the face of the sun, in the ears of all mankind? O renounce the foolish hope of heresy, for your sin is this day recorded and shall one day be advertised upon the walls of heaven!

II. In the next place, let us notice THE MISERY OF SECRET SINS.

Of all sinners, the man who makes a profession of religion and yet lives in iniquity is the most miserable. A downright wicked man who takes a glass in his hand and says, "I am a drunkard, I am not ashamed of it"—shall be unutterably miserable in worlds to come. But brief though it is, he has his hour of pleasure. A man who curses and swears and says, "That is my habit, I am a profane man," and makes a profession of it, he has, at least, some peace in his soul. But the man who walks with God's minister, who is united with God's church, who comes out before God's people and unites with them and then lives in sin—what a miserable existence he must have! Why, he has a worse existence than the mouse that is in the parlor, running out, now and then, to pick up the crumbs and then back again to his hole! Such men must run out, now and then, to sin! And, oh, how fearful they are to be discovered! One day, perhaps, their character turns up. With wonderful cunning they manage to conceal and gloss it over, but the next day something else comes and they live in constant fear, telling lie after lie to make the last lie appear truthful—adding deception to deception—in order that they may not be discovered—

***"Oh, 'tis a tangled web we weave,
When once we venture to deceive!"***

If I must be a wicked man, give me the life of a boisterous sinner who sins before the face of day! If I must sin, let me not act as a hypocrite and a coward! Let me not profess to be God's and spend my life for the devil! That way of cheating the devil is a thing which every honest sinner will be ashamed of. He will say, "If I serve my master, I will serve him out and out, I will have no sham about it. If I make a profession, I will carry it out

but if I do not, if I live in sin, I am not going to gloss it over by cant and hypocrisy.” One thing which has hamstrung the church and cut her very sinews in two has been this most damnable hypocrisy! Oh, in how many places have we seen men whom you might praise to the very skies if you could believe their words—but whom you might cast into the nethermost pit of hell if you could see their secret actions? God forgive any of you who are so acting! I had almost said I can scarcely forgive you. I *can* forgive the man who riots openly and makes no profession of being better. But the man who fawns and cants and pretends and prays and then lives in sin—that man I hate—I cannot stand him! I abhor him from my very soul! If he will turn from his ways, I will love him, but in his hypocrisy he is to me the most loathsome of all creatures! ‘Tis said the toad wears a jewel in her head, but the hypocrite has none but bears filthiness about him—while he pretends to be in love with righteousness! A mere profession, my hearers, is but painted pageantry to go to hell in! It is like the plumes upon the hearse and the trappings upon the black horses which drag men to their graves—the funeral array of dead souls! Take heed above everything of a waxen profession that will not stand the sun! Take care of all that needs to have two faces to carry it out. Be one thing, or else the other. If you make up your mind to serve Satan, do not pretend to serve God. And if you serve God, serve Him with all your heart! “No man can serve two masters.” Do not try it, do not endeavor to do it, for no life will be more miserable than that. Above all, beware of committing acts which it will be necessary to conceal. There is a singular poem by Hood, called “*The Dream of Eugene Aram*”—a most remarkable piece it is, indeed, illustrating the point on which I am now dwelling. Aram has murdered a man and cast his body into the river—“a sluggish water, black as ink, the depth was so extreme.” The next morning he visited the scene of his guilt—

**“And sought the black accursed pool,
With a wild misgiving eye—
And he saw the dead in the river bed,
For the faithless stream was dry!”**

Next he covered the corpse with heaps of leaves, but a mighty wind swept through the forest and left the secret bare before the sun—

**“Then down I cast me on my face,
And first began to weep,
For I knew my secret then was one
That earth refused to keep!
On land or sea though it should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep.”**

In plaintive notes he prophesies his own discovery. He buried his victim in a cave, and trod him down with stones, but when years had run their

weary round, the foul deed was discovered, and the murderer put to death!

Guilt is a “grim chamberlain,” even when fingers are not bloody red. Secret sins bring fevered eyes and sleepless nights until men burn out their consciences and become in very deed ripe for the pit of hell! Hypocrisy is a hard game to play, for it is one deceiver against many observers. And for certain it is a miserable trade which will earn, at last, as its certain climax, a tremendous bankruptcy! Ah, you who have sinned without discovery, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” And remember, it may find you out before long. Sin, like murder, will come out—men will even tell tales about themselves in their dreams. God has sometimes made men so pricked in their consciences that they have been obliged to come forward and confess the crime. Secret sinner! If you want the foretaste of damnation upon earth, continue in your secret sin, for no man is more miserable than he who sins secretly and yet tries to preserve a character! Yonder stag, followed by the hungry hounds with open mouths, is far happier than the man who is followed by his sins. Yonder bird, taken in the fowler’s net and laboring to escape, is far happier than he who has weaved around himself a web of deception and labors to escape from it day by day by making the toils more thick, and the web stronger! Oh, the misery of secret sins! Truly, one may pray, “Cleanse You me from secret faults.”

III. But now, next, the guilt—THE SOLEMN GUILT OF SECRET SIN.

Now, John, you do not think there is any evil in a thing unless somebody sees it, do you? You feel that it is a very great sin if your master finds you out in robbing the till—but there is no sin if he should not discover it—none at all. And you, sir, you fancy it to be very great sin to play a trick in trade—in the event you should be discovered and brought before the court! But to play a trick and never be discovered, that is all fair—do not say a word about it, Mr. Spurgeon, it is all business! You must not touch business—tricks that are not discovered, of course you are not to find fault with them. The common measure of sin is the notoriety of it. But I do not believe that! A sin is a sin, whether done in private or before the whole world. It is singular how men will measure guilt. A railway servant puts up a wrong signal—there is an accident. The man is tried and severely reprimanded. The day before, he also put up the wrong signal, but there was no accident and, therefore, no one cursed him for his neglect! But it was just the same, accident or no accident—the accident did not make the guilt—it was the *deed* which made the guilt, not the notoriety nor even the consequence of it! It was his business to have taken care and he was as guilty the first time as he was the second, for he negligently exposed the lives of men! Do not measure sin by what oth-

er people say of it, but measure sin by what God says of it and what your own conscience says of it!

Now I hold that secret sin, if anything, is the worst sin because secret sin implies that the man who commits it has Atheism in his heart. You will ask how that can be? I reply, he may be a professing Christian, but I shall tell him to his face that he is a practical Atheist if he labors to keep up a respectable profession before man and then secretly transgresses. Why, is he not an Atheist who will say there is a God, yet at the same time thinks more of man than he does of God? Is it not the very essence of Atheism—is it not a denial of the divinity of the Most High when men lightly esteem Him and think more of the eyes of a creature than of the observation of their Creator? There are some who would not for the life of them say a wicked word in the presence of their minister, but they can do it even knowing God is looking at them. They are Atheists! There are some who would not trick in trade for the entire world if they thought they would be discovered. But they can do it while God is with them, that is, they think more of the eyes of man than of the eyes of God. And they think it worse to be condemned by man than to be condemned by God! Call it by what name you will—the proper name of that is *practical Atheism*. It is dishonoring God. It is dethroning Him—putting Him down below His own creatures! And what is that but to take away His divinity? Brothers and sisters, do not, I beseech you, incur the fearful guilt of secret sins! No man can sin a little in secret—it will certainly engender more sin. No man can be a hypocrite and yet be moderate in guilt—he will go from bad to worse and still proceed—until when his guilt shall be published—he shall be found to be the very worst and the most hardened of men! Take heed of the guilt of secret sin! Ah, if I could preach as Rowland Hill did, I would make some people look to themselves and tremble! It is said that when he preached, there was not a man in the window, or standing in the crowd, or perched up anywhere but said, “There, he is preaching at me! He is telling me about my secret sins.” And when he proclaimed God’s omniscience, it is said men would almost think they saw God bodily present in the midst of them looking at them! And when he had finished his sermon, they would hear a voice in their ears, “Can any hide himself in secret places that I cannot see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord.” I wish I could do that—that I could make every man look to himself and find out his secret sin. Come my hearer, what is it? Bring it forth to the daylight. Perhaps it will die in the light of the sun. These things love to not be discovered. Tell your own conscience, now, what it is. Look it in the face. Confess it before God and may He give you divine grace to remove that sin and every other and turn to Him with full purpose of heart! But know this—your

guilt is guilt discovered or undiscovered—and if there is any difference it is worse, because it has been secret. God save us from the guilt of secret sin! “Cleanse You me from secret faults.”

IV. And note, next, THE DANGER OF SECRET SIN. One danger is that a man cannot commit a little sin in secret without being, by-and-by, betrayed into a *public* sin. You cannot, sir, though you may think you can, preserve a moderation in sin! If you commit one sin, it is like the melting of the lower glacier upon the Alps. The others must follow in time. As certainly as you heap one stone upon the mound, today, the next day you will cast another, until the heap, reared stone by stone, shall become a very pyramid! See the coral insect at work—you cannot decree where it will stop its work. It will not build its rock just as high as you please. It will not stop until it shall be covered with weeds and until the weeds shall decay. And then there shall be soil upon it and an island shall be created by tiny creatures. Sin cannot be held in with bit and bridle! “But I am going to have a little drink now and then; I am only going to be intoxicated once a week or so. Nobody will see it. I shall be in bed directly.” You will soon be drunk in the streets! “I am only just going to read one lascivious book; I will put it under the sofa when anyone comes in.” You will keep it in your library yet, sir! “I am only going into that company now and then.” You will go there every day; such is the bewitching character of it. You cannot help it. You may as well ask the lion to let you put your head into his mouth! You cannot regulate his jaws—neither can you regulate sin! Once go into it, you cannot tell when you will be destroyed! You may be such a fortunate individual that like Van Amburgh—you may put your head in and out a great many times—but rest assured that one of these days it will be a costly venture! Again—you may labor to conceal your vicious habit but it will come out—you cannot help it. You keep your little pet sin at home. But mark this, when the door is ajar, the dog will be out in the street! Wrap him up in your bosom, put over him fold after fold of hypocrisy to keep him secret—the wretch will be singing some day when you are in company! You cannot keep the evil bird still. Your sin will gad abroad. And what is more, you will not mind it some of these days. A man who indulges in sin, privately, by degrees gets his forehead as hard as brass. The first time he sinned, the drops of sweat stood on his brow at the recollection of what he had done. The second time, no hot sweat was on his brow—only an agitation of the muscle. The third time there was the sly, sneaky look but no agitation. The next time he sinned a little further. And by degrees he became the bold blasphemer of his God and exclaims, “Who am I that I should fear Jehovah and who is He that I should serve Him?” Men go from bad to worse! Launch your boat in the current—it must go where the current takes it. Put yourself

in the whirlwind—you are but a straw in the wind—you must go which way the wind carries you—you cannot control yourself! The balloon can mount, but it cannot direct its course. It must go whichever way the wind blows. If you once mount into sin there is no stopping! Take heed if you would not become the worst of characters. Take heed of the little sins. They, mounting one upon another, may at last heave you from the summit and destroy your soul forever! There is a great danger in secret sins!

But I have here some true Christians who indulge in secret sins. They say it is but a little one, and therefore, do they spare it. Dear brothers and sisters, I speak to you and I speak to myself, when I say this—let us destroy all our little secret sins! They are called little and if they are, let us remember that it is the foxes, even the little foxes, that spoil our vines, for our vines have tender shoots. Let us take heed of our little sins! A little sin, like a little pebble in the shoe, will make a traveler to heaven walk very wearily. Little sins, like little thieves, may open the door to greater ones outside. Christians, remember that little sins will spoil your communion with Christ. Little sins, like little stains in silk, may damage the fine texture of Fellowship. Little sins, like little irregularities in the machinery, may spoil the whole fabric of your religion! The one dead fly spoils the whole pot of ointment. That one thistle may seed a continent with noxious weeds. Let us, brothers and sisters, kill our sins as often as we can find them! One said—“The heart is full of unclean birds. It is a cage of them.” “Ah but,” said another divine, “you must not make that an apology, for a Christian’s business is to wring their necks.” And so it is! If there are evil things, it is our business to kill them! Christians must not tolerate secret sins. We must not harbor traitors. It is high treason against the King of heaven! Let us drag them out to light and offer them upon the altar, giving up the dearest of our secret sins at the will and bidding of God. There is a great danger in a little secret sin. Therefore avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and shun it—and God give you grace to overcome it!

V. And now I come, in finishing up, to plead with all my might with some of you whom God has pricked in your consciences. I have come to entreat you, if it is possible, even to tears that you will give up your secret sins. I have one here for whom I bless God. I love him, though I know him not. He is almost persuaded to be a Christian. He halts between two opinions. He intends to serve God—he strives to give up sin, but he finds it a hard struggle and as yet he knows not what shall become of him. I speak to him with all love—my friend, will you have your sin and go to hell, or leave your sin and go to heaven? This is the solemn alternative—to an awakened sinner I put it—may God choose for you,

otherwise I tremble as to which you may choose! The pleasures of this life are so intoxicating, the joys of it so ensnaring that did I not believe that God works in us to will and to do, I should despair of you! But I have confidence that God will decide the matter. Let me lay the alternative before you—on the one hand there is an hour's merriment—a short life of bliss and that a poor, poor bliss. On the other hand there is everlasting life and eternal glory! On the one hand, there is a transient happiness and afterwards overwhelming woe. In this case there is a solid peace and everlasting joy and after it overflowing bliss! I shall not fear to be called an Arminian, when I say, as Elijah did, "Choose this day whom you will serve. If God is God, serve Him. If Baal is God serve him." But, now, make your choice deliberately. And may God help you to do it! Do not say you will take up with religion, without first counting the cost of it. Remember, there is your lust to be given up and your pleasure to be renounced—can you do it for Christ's sake? Can you? I know you cannot unless God's grace shall assist you in making such a choice! But can you say, "Yes, by the help of God, earth's gaudy toys, its pomps, pageantries, gewgaws, all these I renounce"?—

***"These can never satisfy,
Give me Christ or else I die!"***

Sinner, you will never regret that choice, if God helps you to make it! You will find yourself a happy man here and thrice happy throughout eternity!

"But," says one, "Sir, I intend to be religious, but I do not hold with your strictness." I do not ask you to do so. I hope, however, you will hold with God's strictness and God's strictness is ten thousand times greater than mine! You may say that I am Puritanical in my preaching—God will be Puritanical in judging in that great day. I may appear severe, but I can never be as severe as God will be! I may draw the harrow with sharp teeth across your conscience, but God shall drag harrows of eternal fire across you one day! I may speak thundering things—God will not speak them but hurl them from His hands! Remember, men may laugh at hell and say there is none, but they must reject their Bibles before they can believe that lie! Men's consciences tell them that—

***"There is a dreadful hell,
And everlasting pains!
Where sinners must with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire and chains!"***

Sirs, will you keep your secret sins and have eternal fire for them? Remember it is of no use—they must all be given up—or else you cannot be God's child. You cannot by any means have both! It cannot be God and the world. It cannot be Christ and the devil. It must be one or the other! Oh, that God would give you grace to resign all, for what are they worth?

They are your deceivers, now, and will be your tormentors forever! Oh, that your eyes were open to see the rottenness, the emptiness and trickery of iniquity! Oh, that God would turn you to Himself! Oh, may God give you divine grace to cross the Rubicon of repentance at this very hour! May He give you grace to say, "Henceforth it is war to the knife with my sins. Not one of them will I willingly keep but down with them, down with them—Canaanite, Hittite, Jebusite, they shall all be driven out!"—

***"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be—
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee!"***

"But oh, sir, I cannot do it, it would be like pulling my eyes out!" Yes, but hear what Christ says—"It were better for you to enter into life with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." "But it would be like cutting my arm off." Yes and it would be better for you to enter into life crippled or maimed, than to be cast into hell fire forever. Oh, when the sinner comes before God at last, do you think he will speak as he does now? God will reveal his secret sins—the sinner will not then say, "Lord, I thought my secret sins so sweet, I could not give them up." I think I see how changed it will be then. "Sir," you say now, "you are too strict." Will you say that when the eyes of the Almighty are glowering on you? You say now, "Sir *you are too precise.*" Will you say that to God Almighty's face? "Sir, *I mean to keep such-and-such a sin.*" Can you say it at God's bar at last? You will not dare to do it then! Ah, when Christ comes a second time there will be a marvelous change in the way men talk. I think I see Him. There He sits upon His throne. Now, Caiaphas, come and condemn Him now! Judas! Come and kiss Him now! What do you stick at, man? Are you afraid of Him? Now, Barabbas! Go see whether they will prefer you to Christ now! Swearer, now is *your* time. You have been a bold man—curse Him to His face now! Now, *drunkard*—stagger up to Him now! Now, *infidel*—tell Him there is no Christ now—now that the world is lit with lightning and the earth is shaking with thunder till the solid pillars thereof do bow themselves—tell God there is no God now! Now laugh at the Bible! Now scoff at the minister. Why men, what is the matter with you? Why, can't you do it? Ah, there you are, you have fled to the hills and to the rocks—"Rocks hide us! Mountains fall on us! Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne." Ah, where are your boasts now? Alas! Alas for you in that dread day of wonders!

Secret sinner—what will become of you? Go out of this place unmasked; go out of here to examine yourself; go out and bend your knees; go out to weep and to pray, but God give you grace to *believe!* And oh, how sweet and pleasant the thought—that this day sinners have fled to

Christ and men have been born-again to Jesus! Brothers and sisters, before I finish, I repeat the words at which so many have quibbled—it is now or never, it is *turn or burn!* Solemnly in God’s sight I say it. If it is not God’s truth, I must answer for it in the great day of account. Your consciences tell you it is true. Take it home and mock me if you will. This morning I am clear of your blood—if any seek not God but live in sin, I shall be clear of your blood in that day when the watchman shall have your souls demanded of Him. Oh, may God grant that you may be cleared in a blessed manner! When I went down these pulpit stairs a Sabbath or two ago, a friend said to me words which have been in my mind ever since—“Sir, there are 9,000 people this day without excuse in the day of Judgment.” It is true of you this morning. If you are damned, it will be not for want of preaching to you, and it shall not be for want of praying for you! God knows that if my heart could break of itself, it would for your souls! God is my witness how earnestly I long for you in the heart of Christ Jesus. Oh, that He might touch your hearts, and bring you to Him! Brothers and sisters death is a solemn thing. Damnation is a horrible thing. To be out of Christ is a dreadful thing. To be dead in sin is a terrible thing. May God lead you to view these things as they are and save you, for His mercy’s sake! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”—

***“Lord, search my soul, try every thought!
Though my own heart accuse me not
Of walking in a false disguise,
I beg the trial of Your eyes!
Does secret mischief lurk within?
Do I indulge some unknown sin?
O turn my feet whenever I stray,
And lead me in Your perfect way!”***

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DO YOU LOVE ME?

NO. 117

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 15, 1857,
REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

“Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me more than these? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said unto him, Feed My lambs. He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord You know that I love You. He said unto him, Feed My sheep. He said unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, do you love Me? And he said unto Him, Lord You know all things. You know that I love You. Jesus said unto him, Feed My sheep.”
John 21:15-17.

HOW very much like Christ before His crucifixion was Christ after His resurrection! Although He had lain in the grave and descended into the regions of the dead and had retraced his steps to the land of the living, yet how marvelously similar He was in His manners and how unchanged in His disposition. His passion, His death and His resurrection could not alter His character as a man any more than they could affect His attributes as God. He is Jesus forever the same. And when He appeared, again, to His disciples, He had cast aside none of His kind manners. He had not lost a particle of interest in their welfare. He addressed them just as tenderly as before and called them His children and His friends. Concerning their temporal condition He was mindful, for He said, “Children, have you any meat?” And He was certainly quite as watchful over their spiritual state, for after He had supplied their bodies by a rich draught from the sea, with fish (which possibly He had created for the occasion), He inquires after their souls’ health and prosperity. He began with the one who might be supposed to have been in the sickliest condition, the one who had denied his Master thrice, and wept bitterly—even Simon Peter. “Simon, son of Jonas,” said Jesus, “Do you love Me?”

Without preface, for we shall have but little time this morning—may God help us to make good use of it!—we shall mention three things. First, *a solemn question*—“Do you love Me?” Secondly, *a discreet answer*, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.” And thirdly, *a required demonstration of the fact*. “He said unto him, Feed My lambs.” Or again, “Feed My sheep.”

I. First, then, here was a SOLEMN QUESTION which our Savior put to Peter, not for His own information, for, as Peter said, “You know that I love You,” but for Peter’s examination. It is well, especially after a foul sin, that the Christian should well probe the wound. It is right that he should examine himself, for sin gives grave cause for suspicion and it would be wrong for a Christian to live an hour with a suspicion concerning his spiritual estate unless he occupies that hour in examination of himself! Self-examination should more especially follow sin, though it ought to be the daily habit of every Christian and should be practiced by him perpetually. Our Savior, I say, asked this question of Peter, that he might ask it of himself. So we may suppose it is asked of us, this morning, that we may put it to our own hearts. Let each one ask himself, then, in his Savior’s name, for his own profit, “Do you love the Lord? Do you love the Savior? Do you love the ever-blessed Redeemer?”

Note what this question was. *It was a question concerning Peter’s love.* He did not say, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you *fear* Me.” He did not say, “Do you *admire* Me? Do you *adore* Me?” Nor was it even a question concerning his faith. He did not say, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you *believe* in Me?” But He asked him another question, “Do you *love* Me?” I take it that is because love is the very best evidence of piety—love is the brightest of all the divine graces—and hence it becomes the best evidence. I do not believe love to be superior to faith. I believe faith to be the groundwork of our salvation. I think faith to be the mother grace and love springs from it. Faith I believe to be the root grace and love grows from it. But then, faith is not an evidence for brightness equal to love. Faith, if we have it, is a sure and certain sign that we are God’s children and so is every other grace a sure and certain one, but many of them cannot be seen by others. Love is a more sparkling one than any other. If I have a true fear of God in my heart, then am I God’s child. But since fear is a grace that is more dim and has not that halo of glory over it that love has, love becomes one of the very best evidences and one of the easiest signs of discerning whether we are alive to the Savior! He who lacks love, must also lack every other grace in the proportion in which he lacks love. If love is little, I believe it is a sign that faith is little, for he who believes much, loves much. If love is little, fear will be little and courage for God will be little. Whatever graces there are, faith lies at the root of them all, yet do they so sweetly hang on love, that if love is weak, all the rest of the graces most assuredly will be so. Our Lord asked Peter, then, that question, “Do you love Me?”

And note, again, *that He did not ask Peter anything about his doings.* He did not say, “Simon Peter, how much have you wept? How often have you done penance on account of your great sin? How often have you on

your knees sought mercy at My hand for the slight you have done to Me and for that terrible cursing and swearing wherewith you did disown your Lord, whom you had declared you would follow even to prison and to death?" No, it was not in reference to his *works* but in reference to the state of his *heart* that Jesus said, "Do you love Me?" He did this to teach us that though works do follow after a sincere love, yet love is more excellent than works—and works without love are not evidences worth having. We may have some tears, but they are not the tears that God shall accept if there is no love to Him. We may have some works, but they are not acceptable works if they are not done out of love to Him. We may perform very many of the outward ritual observances of religion, but unless love lies at the bottom, all these things are vain and useless! The question, then, "Do you love Me?" is a very vital question—far more so than one that merely concerns the outward conduct. It is a question that goes into the very heart and in such a way that it brings the whole heart to one question—for if love is wrong, everything else is wrong! "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?"

Ah, dear beloved, we have very much cause for asking ourselves this question! If our Savior were no more than a man like ourselves, He might often doubt whether we love Him at all. Let me just remind you of sundry things which give us very great cause to ask this question—"Do you love Me?" I will deal only with the last week. Come, my Christian brothers and sisters, look at your own conduct. Do not your sins make you doubt whether you love your Master? Come, look over the sins of this week—when you were speaking with an angry word and with a sullen look, might not your Lord have touched you and said, "Do you love Me?" When you were doing such-and-such a thing, which you right well know in your conscience was not according to His precept, might He not have said, "Do you love Me?" Can you not remember the murmuring words because something had gone wrong with you in business this week and you were speaking ill of the God of providence for it? Oh, might not the loving Savior, with pity in His languid eyes, have said to you, "Do you love Me?" I need not stop to mention the various sins of which you have been guilty. You have sinned, I am sure, enough to give good ground for self-suspicion, if you did not still hang on this—that His love *to you*, not *your* love to Him, is the seal of your discipleship! Oh, do you not think within yourselves, "If I had loved Him more, would I have sinned so much? And oh, can I love Him when I have broken so many of His commandments? Have I reflected His glorious Image to the world as I should have done? Have I not wasted many hours within this week that I might have spent in winning souls to Him? Have I not thrown away many precious moments in light and frivolous conversation which I might have

spent in earnest prayer? Oh, how many words have I uttered, which if they have not been filthy (as I trust they have not) yet have not been such as have ministered grace to the hearers? Oh, how many follies have I indulged in? How many sins have I winked at? How many crimes have I covered over? How have I made my Savior's heart bleed? How have I done dishonor to His cause? How have I in some degree disgraced my heart's profession of love to Him?" Oh, ask these questions of yourself, beloved and say, "Is this your kindness to your friend?" But I hope this week has been one wherein you have sinned little openly as to the world, or even in your own estimation, as to open acts of crime.

But now let me put another question to you, *Does not your worldliness make you doubt?* How have you been occupied with the world, from Monday morning to the last hour of Saturday night? You have scarcely had time to think of Him. What corners have you pushed your Jesus into to make room for your bales of goods? How have you stowed Him away into one short five minutes, to make room for your ledger or your day-book? How little time have you given to Him! You have been occupied with the shop, with the exchange and the farmyard—and you have had little time to commune with Him! Come, just think! Remember any one day this week—can you say that your soul always flew upward with passionate desires to Him? Did you pant like a hart for your Savior during the week? No, perhaps there was a whole day went by and you scarcely thought of Him till the winding up of it. And then you could only upbraid yourself, "How have I forgotten Christ today? I have not beheld His person. I have not walked with Him, I have not done as Enoch did! I knew He would come into the shop with me. I knew He is such a blessed Christ that He would stand behind the counter with me. I knew He was such a joyous Lord Jesus that He would walk through the market with me! But I left Him at home and forgot Him all the day long." Surely, surely, beloved, when you remember your worldliness, you must say of yourself, "O Lord, you might well ask, 'Do you love Me?'"

Consider again, I beseech you, *how cold you have been this week at the mercy seat.* You have been there, for you can not live without it. You have lifted up your heart in prayer, for you are a Christian and prayer is as necessary to you as your breath! But oh, with what a poor asthmatic breath have you lived this week! How little have you breathed? Do you remember how hurried was your prayer on Monday morning, how driven you were on Tuesday night? Can you not recollect how languid was your heart when on another occasion you were on your knees? You have had little wrestling this week—little agonizing. You have had little of the prayer which prevails! You have scarcely laid hold of the horns of the altar. You have stood in the distance and seen the smoke at the altar, but you

have not laid hold of the horns of it. Come, ask yourself, do not your prayers make you doubt? I say, honestly before you all, my own prayers often make me doubt and I know nothing that gives me more grave cause of disquietude. When I labor to pray—oh, that rascally devil—fifty thousand thoughts he tries to inject to take me off from prayer! And when I will and must pray, oh, what an absence there is of that burning fervent desire! And when I would come right close to God—when I would weep my very eyes out in penitence and would believe and take the blessing—oh, what little faith and what little penitence there is! Verily, I have thought that prayer has made me more unbelieving than anything else! I could believe over the tops of my sins, but sometimes I can scarcely believe over the tops of my prayers—for oh, how cold is prayer when it is cold! Of all things that are bad when cold, I think prayer is the worst, for it becomes like a very mockery—instead of warming the heart, it makes it colder than it was before! It seems even to dampen its life and spirit and fills it full of doubts whether it is really a heir of Heaven and accepted of Christ. Oh, look at your cold prayers, Christian! And say is not your Savior right to ask this question very solemnly, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?”

But stop! Again—just one more word for you to reflect upon; perhaps you have had much prayer and this has been a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. But maybe you know you have not gone so far this week as you might have done in another exercise of godliness that is even better than prayer—I mean communion and fellowship. Oh, beloved, you have this week had but little sitting under the apple tree and finding its shadow great delight to you! You have not gone much this week to the banquet house and had its banner of love over you! Come, think about it, how little have you seen your Lord this week? Perhaps He has been absent the greater part of the time. And have you not groaned? Have you not wept? Have you not sighed after Him? Surely, then, you cannot have loved Him as you should, or else you could not have borne His absence! You could not have endured it calmly if you had the affection for Him a sanctified spirit has for its Lord! You did have one sweet visit from Him in the week and why did you let Him go? Why did you not constrain Him to abide with you? Why did you not lay hold of the skirts of His garment and say, “Why should You be like a wayfaring man and as one that turns aside and tarries for a night? Oh, my Lord, You shall dwell with me! I will keep You. I will detain You in my company. I cannot let You go! I love You and I will constrain You to dwell with me this night and the next day. As long as I can keep You, I will keep You.” But no, you were foolish. You did let Him go! Oh, soul, why did you not lay hold of His arm and say, “I will not let You go”? But you did lay hold on Him so

feebly, you did allow Him to depart so quickly, He might have turned round and said to you, as He said to Simon, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?”

Now, I have asked you all these questions because I have been asking them of myself. I feel that I must answer to nearly every one of them, “Lord, there is great cause for me to ask myself that question,” and I think that most of you, if you are honest with yourselves, will say the same. I do not approve of the man who says, “I know I love Christ and I never have a doubt about it.” Because we often have reason to doubt ourselves, a believer’s strong faith is not a strong faith in his own love to Christ—it is a strong faith in Christ’s love to him! There is no faith which always believes that it loves Christ. Strong faith has its conflicts and a true believer will often wrestle in the very teeth of his own feelings. Lord, if I ever did love You, nevertheless, if I am not a saint, I am a sinner! Lord, I still believe. Help You my unbelief! The disciple can believe when he feels no love, for he can believe that Christ loves the soul. And when he has no evidence, he can go to Christ without evidence and lay hold of Him, just as He is, with naked faith and still hold fast by Him! Though he sees not His signs, though he walk in darkness and there is no light, still may he trust in the Lord and stay upon His God—but to be certain at all times that we love the Lord is quite another matter. About this we have need continually to question ourselves and most scrupulously to examine both the nature and the extent of our evidences.

II. And now I come to the second thing which is A DISCREET ANSWER. “Simon son of Jonas, do you love Me?” Simon gave a very good answer. Jesus asked him, in the first place, whether he loved Him better than others. Simon would not say that—he had once been a little proud—more than a little—and thought he was better than the other disciples. But this time he evaded that question. He would not say that he loved better than others. And I am sure there is no loving heart that will think it loves even better than the least of God’s children. I believe the higher a man is in grace, the lower he will be in his own esteem and he will be the last person to claim any supremacy over others in the divine grace of love to Jesus! But mark how Simon Peter did answer—he did not answer as to the quantity but as to the quality of his love. He would assert that he loved Christ, but not that he loved Christ better than others. “Lord, I cannot say how much I love You, but You know all things, You know that I love You. So far as I can assert—as to the quantity of my love, I cannot say much about it.”

But just notice, again, *the discreet manner in which Peter answered*. Some of us, if we had been asked that question, would have answered foolishly. We would have said, “Lord, I have preached for You so many

times this week. Lord, I have distributed of my substance to the poor this week. Blessed be Your name, You have given me grace to walk humbly, faithfully and honestly—and therefore, Lord, I think I can say, ‘I love You.’” We have brought our good works before our Master as being the evidences of our love. We should have said, “Lord, You have seen me during this week. I say as Nehemiah did of old, ‘Forget not my good works. O Lord, I thank you. I know they are Your gifts, but I think they are proofs of my love.’” That would have been a very good answer if we had been questioned by our fellow man and he had said, “You do not always love your Savior.” But it would be foolish for us to tell the Master that! Peter’s answer was wise—“Lord, You know that I love You.” You know the Master might have said to Peter, had he appealed to his works, “Yes, you may preach and yet not love Me. You may pray, after a fashion, and yet not love Me. You may do all these works and yet have no love to Me. I did not ask you what are the evidences of your love—I asked you the fact of it.” Very likely all my dear friends here would not have answered in the fashion I have supposed. But they would have said, “love You, Lord? Why, my heart is all on fire towards You! I feel as if I could go to prison and to death for You! Sometimes, when I think of You, my heart is ravished with bliss. And when You are absent, O Lord, I moan and cry like a dove that has lost its mate! Yes, I feel I love You, O my Christ.” But that would have been very foolish, because although we may often rejoice in our own feelings—they are joyful things—it would not do to plead them with our Lord, for He might answer, “Ah, you feel joyful at the mention of My name. So, no doubt, has many a deluded one, because he had a fictitious faith and a fancied hope in Christ. Therefore the name of Christ seemed to gladden him. You say, ‘I have felt dull when You have been absent.’ That might have been accounted for from natural circumstances. You had a headache, perhaps, or some other ailment.” “But,” you say, “I felt so happy when He was present that I thought I could die.” Ah, in such manner Peter had spoken many a time before, but a sorry mess he made of it when he trusted his feelings, for he would have sunk into the sea but for Christ—and eternally damned his soul, if it had not been for His grace, when, with cursing and swearing he thrice denied his Lord! But no, Peter was wise. He did not bring forward his frames and feelings, nor did he bring his evidences—though they are good in themselves—he did not bring them before Christ. But, as though he shall say, “Lord, I appeal to Your omnipotence; I am not going to tell You that the volume of my heart must contain such-and-such matter, because there is such-and-such a mark on its cover, for Lord, you can read inside of it. And, therefore I need not tell You what the title is, nor read over to You the index of the contents. Lord, You know that I love You.”

Now, could we, this morning, dear friends, give such an answer as that to the question? If Christ should come here. If He were now to walk down these aisles and along the pews, could we appeal to His own divine omniscience, His infallible knowledge of our hearts, that we all love Him? There is a test-point between a hypocrite and a real Christian. If you are a hypocrite, you might say, "Lord, my minister knows that I love You. Lord, the deacons know that I love You. They think I do, for they have given me a ticket. The members think I love You for they see me sitting at Your table. My friends think I love You, for they often hear me talk about You." But you could not say, "Lord, You know that I love You." Your own heart is witness that your secret works belie your confession, for you are without prayer in secret and you can preach a 20 minute prayer in public! You are stingy and frugal in giving to the cause of Christ, but you can sport your name to be seen! You are an angry, petulant creature, but when you come to the house of God, you have a pious whine and talk like a canting hypocrite, as if you were a very gentlemanly man and never seemed angry! You can take your Maker's name in vain, but if you hear another do it, you would be mighty severe upon him! You appear to be very pious and yet if men knew of that widow's house that is sticking in your throat and of that orphan's patrimony which you have taken from him, you would leave off trumpeting your good deeds! Your own heart tells you that you are a liar before God! But you, O sincere Christian, you can welcome your Lord's question and answer it with holy fear and gracious confidence! Yes, you may welcome the question. Such a question was never put to Judas. The Lord loved Peter so much that He was jealous over him, or He never would have thus challenged his attachment. And in this kind does He often appeal to the affections of those whom He dearly loves. The response likewise is recorded for you, "Lord, You know all things." Can you not look up, though scorned by men—though even rejected by your minister, though kept back by the deacons and looked upon with disesteem by some—can you not look up and say, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You"? Do it not in brag and brava-do. But if you can do it sincerely, be happy! Bless God that He has given you a sincere love to the Savior and ask Him to increase it from a spark to a flame and from a grain to a mountain. "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? Yes, Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You."

III. And now here is a DEMONSTRATION REQUIRED—"Feed My lambs—feed My sheep."

That was Peter's demonstration. It is not necessary that it should be our way of showing our love. There are different ways for different disciples. There are some who are not qualified to feed lambs, for they are only little lambs themselves. There are some that could not feed sheep, for

they cannot at present see afar off. They are weak in the faith and not qualified to teach at all. They have other means, however, of showing their love to the Savior. Let us offer a few words upon this matter.

“Do you love Me?” Then one of the best evidences you can give is *to feed My lambs*. Have I two or three little children that love and fear My name? If you want to do a deed which shall show that you are a true lover and not a proud pretender, go and feed them! Are there a few little ones whom I have purchased with My blood in an infant class? Do you want to do something which shall give evidence that you are indeed Mine? Then sit not down with the elders, dispute not in the temple! I did that Myself—but go and sit down with the young orphans and teach them the way to the Kingdom. “Feed My lambs.”

Dearly beloved, I have been of late perplexing myself with one thought—that our church government is not Scriptural. It is Scriptural as far as it goes. But it is not according to the whole of Scripture! Neither do we practice many excellent things that ought to be practiced in our churches. We have received into our midst a large number of young persons. In the ancient churches there was what was called the Catechism class—I believe there ought to be such a class now. The Sabbath school, I believe, is in Scripture. And I think there ought to be on the Sabbath afternoon, a class of the young people of this church, who are already members, to be taught by some of the elder members. Nowadays, when we get the lambs, we just turn them adrift in the meadow and there we leave them. There are more than a hundred young people in this church who positively, though they are members, ought not to be left alone! But some of our elders, if we have elders—and some who ought to be ordained elders—should make it their business to teach them further, to instruct them in the faith and so keep them hard and fast by the truth of Jesus Christ. If we had elders, as they had in all the apostolic churches, this might in some degree be attended to. But now the hands of our deacons are full—they do much of the work of the eldership but they cannot do any more than they are doing, for they are toiling hard already. I would that some here whom God has gifted and who have time, would spend their afternoons in taking a class of those younger brothers and sisters who live around them, to their houses for prayer and pious instruction, that the lambs of the flock may be fed. By God’s help I will take care of the sheep. I will endeavor under God to feed them, as well as I can, and preach the gospel to them. Yonder that are older in the faith and stronger in it need not that careful cautious feeding which is required by the lambs. There are many in our midst, good pious souls who love the Savior as much as the sheep do. But one of their complaints which I have often heard is, “Oh, sir, I joined your church. I thought they

would be all brothers and sisters to me and that I could speak to them and they would teach me and be kind to me. Oh, sir, I came and nobody spoke to me.” I say, “Why did you not speak to them, first?” “Oh,” they reply, “I did not like.” Well, they should have liked, I am well aware, but if we had some means of feeding the lambs, it would be a good way of proving to our Savior and to the world that we really do endeavor to follow Him! I hope some of my friends will take that hint. And if, in concert with me, my brothers in office will endeavor to do something in that way, I think it will be no mean proof of their love to Christ. “Feed My lambs,” is a great duty—let us try to practice it as we are able!

But, beloved, we cannot all do that. The lambs cannot feed the lambs. The sheep cannot exactly feed the sheep. There must be some appointed to these offices. And therefore, in the Savior’s name, allow me to say to some of you that there are different kinds of proof you must give. “Simon son of Jonas, do you love Me? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.” Then preserve that prayer meeting. Attend to it—see that it is kept going and that it does not fall to the ground. “Simon son of Jonas, do you love Me?” See to your servants—see that they go to the house of God and instruct them in the faith. There is a sister _____. Do you love Christ? “Yes, Lord.” Perhaps it is as much as you can do—perhaps it is as much as you ought to do—to train up your children in the fear of the Lord! It is of no use to trouble yourselves about duties that God never meant you to do and leave your own vineyard at home to itself. Just take care of your own children. Perhaps that is as good a proof as Christ wants of you that you are feeding His lambs. You have your own office, to which Christ has appointed you—seek not to run away from it but endeavor to do what you can to serve your Master therein! But, I beseech you, do *something* to prove your love! Do not be sitting down doing nothing. Do not be folding your hands and arms, for such people perplex a minister most and bring the most ruin on a church—such as do nothing! You are always the most ready to find fault. I have marked it here, that the very people who are quarrelling with everything, are the people that are doing nothing, or are good for nothing! They are sure to quarrel with everything else, because they are doing nothing themselves—and therefore, they have time to find fault with other people! Do not, O Christian, say that you love Christ and yet do nothing for Him! Doing is a good sign of living. And he can scarcely be alive unto God that does nothing for God! We must let our works evidence the sincerity of our love to our Master. “Oh,” you say, “but we are doing a little.” Can you do any more? If you can, then do it! If you cannot do more, then God requires no more of you. Doing to the utmost of your ability is your best proof. But if you can do more, inasmuch as you keep back any part of what you can do, in

that degree you give cause to yourselves to distrust your love to Christ! Do all you can to your very utmost. Serve Him abundantly. Yes and superabundantly—seek to magnify His name! And if ever you do too much for Christ, come and tell me of it. If you ever do too much for Christ, tell the angels of it—but you will never do that! He gave Himself for you—give yourselves to Him!

You see, my friends, how I have been directing you to search your own hearts and I am almost afraid that some of you will mistake my intention. Have I a poor soul here who really deplores the listlessness of her affections? Perhaps you have determined to ask yourself as many questions as you can with a view of reviving the languid sparks of love. Let me tell you, then, that the pure flame of love must be always nourished where it was first kindled. When I admonished you to look to yourself, it was only to detect the evil. Would you find the remedy, you must direct your eyes, not to your own heart, but to the blessed heart of Jesus—to the Beloved one—to my gracious Lord and Master! And would you be ever conscious of the sweet swellings up of your heart towards Him, you can only prove this by a constant sense of His tender love to you! I rejoice to know that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love and the ministry of the Spirit is endeared to me in nothing so much as this—that He takes of the things of Jesus and shows them to me, spreading abroad the Savior's love in my heart until it constrains all my passions, awakens the most tender of all tender emotions, reveals my union to Him and occasions my strong desire to serve Him! Let not *love* appear to you as a stern duty, or an arduous effort! Rather look to Jesus, yield yourself up to His gracious charms till you are ravished with His beauty and preciousness! But ah, if you are slack in the proofs you give, I shall know you are not walking with Him in holy communion.

And allow me to suggest one profitable way of improving the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. That is—while you are partaking of it, my friends, renew your dedication to Christ. Seek this morning to give yourselves over afresh to your Master. Say with your hearts, what I shall now say with my lips—"Oh, my precious Lord Jesus, I do love You! You know I have in some degree given myself to You up to this time, thanks to Your grace! Blessed be Your name that You have accepted the deeds of so unworthy a servant. O Lord, I am conscious that I have not devoted myself to You as I ought. I know that in many things I have come short. I will make no resolution to live better to Your honor, but I will offer the prayer that You would help me to do so. Oh, Lord, I give to You my health, my life, my talents, my power and all I have! You have bought me and bought me wholly—then, Lord, take me this morning, baptize me in the Spirit. Let me now feel an entire affection to Your blessed person. May I

have that love which conquers sin and purifies the soul—that love which can dare danger and encounter difficulties for Your sake! May I henceforth and forever be a consecrated vessel of mercy, having been chosen of You from before the foundation of the world! Help me to hold fast that solemn choice of Your service which I desire this morning, by Your grace to renew.” And when you drink the blood of Christ and eat His flesh spiritually—in the type and in the emblem, then I beseech you, let the solemn recollection of His agony and suffering for you inspire you with a greater love, that you may be more devoted to His service than ever! If that is done, I shall have the best of churches. If that is done by us, the Holy Spirit helping us to carry it out, we shall all be good men and true, holding fast by Him—and we shall not need to be ashamed in the awful day.

As for you who have never given yourselves to Christ, I dare not tell you to renew a vow which you have never made! Nor dare I ask you to make a vow which you would never keep. I can only pray for you, that God the Savior would be pleased to reveal Himself unto your heart, that “a sense of blood-bought pardon” may “dissolve your hearts of stone.” That you may be brought to give yourselves to Him, knowing that if you have done that, you have the best proof that He has given Himself for you! May God Almighty bless you—those of you who depart, may He dismiss with His blessing—and those who remain, may you receive His favor, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE BLOOD-SHEDDING

NO. 118

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING,
FEBRUARY 22, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”
Hebrews 9:22.***

I WILL show you three fools. One is yonder soldier, who has been wounded on the field of battle, grievously wounded, well near unto death. The surgeon is by his side, and the soldier asks him a question. Listen and judge of his folly. What question does he ask? Does he raise his eyes with eager anxiety, and inquire if the wound is mortal, if the practitioner's skill can suggest the means of healing, or if the remedies are within reach, and the medicine at hand? No, nothing of the sort; strange to tell, he asks, “Can you inform me with what sword I was wounded, and by what Russian I have been thus grievously mauled? I want,” he adds, “to learn every minute particular respecting the origin of my wound.” The man is delirious or his head is affected! Surely such questions at such a time are proof enough that he is bereft of his senses!

There is another fool. The storm is raging, the ship is flying impetuously before the gale, the dark scud moves swiftly overhead—the masts are creaking, the sails are torn to rags, and still the gathering tempest grows fiercer—where is the captain? Is he busily engaged on the deck? Is he manfully facing the danger, and skillfully suggesting means to avert it? No, sir, he has retired to his cabin, and there with studious thoughts and crazy fancies, he is speculating on the place where this storm took its rise. “It is mysterious, this wind,” he says, “no one yet has been able to discover it.” And so the lives of the passengers and his own in grievous danger, he is careful only to solve his curious questions. The man is mad, sir! Take the rudder from his hand! He is clean gone mad! If he should ever run on shore, shut him up as a hopeless lunatic!

The third fool I shall doubtless find among yourselves; you are sick and wounded with sin; you are in the storm and hurricane of Almighty vengeance, and yet the question which you would ask of me this morning would be, “Sir, what is the origin of evil?” You are mad, sir, spiritually mad! That is not the question you would ask if you were in a sane and healthy state of mind. Your question would be—“How can I get rid of the evil?” Not, “How did it come into the world?” but, “How am I to escape from it?” Not, “How is it that hail descended from heaven upon Sodom?” but, “How may I, like Lot, escape out of the city to Zoar?” Not, “How is it that I am sick?” but, “Are there medicines that will heal me? Is there a physician to be found who can restore my soul to health?” Ah, you trifle with subtleties while you neglect certainties! More questions have been asked concerning the origin of evil than upon anything else. Men have puzzled their heads and twisted their brains into knots in order to un-

derstand what men can never know—how evil came into this world and how its entrance is consistent with divine goodness. The broad fact is this—there is evil. And your question should be, “How can I escape from the wrath to come, which is engendered of this evil?” In answering that question this verse stands right in the middle of the way (like the angel with the sword, who once stopped Balaam on the road to Barak)—“Without shedding of blood is no remission.” Your real need is to know how you can be saved! If you are aware that your sin must be pardoned or punished, your question will be, “How can it be pardoned?” And then, point blank in the very teeth of your inquiry, there stands out this fact—“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” Mark you, this is not merely a Jewish maxim. It is a world-wide and eternal truth of God! It pertains not to the Hebrews, only, but to the Gentiles likewise. Never in any time, never in any place, never in any person can there be remission apart from shedding of blood! This great fact, I say, is stamped on nature. It is an essential law of God’s moral government. It is one of the fundamental principles which can neither be shaken nor denied. Never can there be any exception to it! It stands the same in every place throughout all ages—“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” It was so with the Jews. They had no remission without the shedding of blood. Some things under the Jewish law might be cleansed by water or by fire, but in no case where absolute sin was concerned was there ever purification *without blood*—teaching this doctrine, that blood and blood, alone, must be applied for the remission of sin! Indeed the very heathen seems to have an inkling of this fact. Do not I see their knives gory with the blood of victims? Have I not heard horrid tales of human immolations, of holocausts, of sacrifices? And what mean these but that there lies deep in the human breast, deep as the very existence of man, this truth of God—“that without shedding of blood there is no remission.” And I assert once more, that even in the hearts and consciences of my hearers there is something which will never let them believe in remission apart from a shedding of blood! This is the grand truth of Christianity and it is a truth which I will now endeavor to fix upon your memory. And may God, by His grace, bless it to your souls. “Without shedding of blood is no remission.”

First, let me show you the blood-shedding, before I begin to dwell upon the text. Is there not a special blood-shedding meant? Yes, there was a shedding of most precious blood to which I must refer you. I shall not now tell you of massacres and murders, nor of rivers of blood of goats and rams. There was a blood-shedding, once, which did outrival all other shedding of blood by far. It was a man—a God—that shed His blood at that memorable season! Come and see it. Here is a dark and gloomy garden. The ground is crisp with the cold frost of midnight. Between those gloomy olive trees I see a man, I hear Him groan out His life in prayer! Listen, angels! Listen, men, and wonder! It is the Savior groaning out His soul! Come and see Him. Behold His brow! O heavens! Drops of blood are streaming down His face and from His body. Every pore is open and it sweats; but not the sweat of men that toil for bread. It is the sweat of one that toils for heaven—He “sweats great drops of blood”! That is the blood-shedding, without which there is no remission! Follow that man further.

They have dragged Him with sacrilegious hands from the place of His prayer and His agony and they have taken Him to the hall of Pilate. They seat Him in a chair and mock Him. A robe of purple is put on His shoulders in mockery. And mark His brow—they have put about it a crown of thorns and the crimson drops of gore are rushing down His cheeks! Angels! The drops of blood are running down His cheeks! But turn aside that purple robe for a moment. His back is bleeding. Tell me demons did this! They lift up the whips, still dripping clots of gore. They scourge and tear His flesh and make a river of blood to run down His shoulders! That is the shedding of blood without which there is no remission! Not yet have I done—they hurry Him through the streets. They fling Him on the ground. They nail His hands and feet to the transverse wood! They hoist it in the air. They dash it into its socket. It is fixed, and there He hangs—the Christ of God! Blood from His head; blood from His hands; blood from His feet! In agony unknown He bleeds away His life! In terrible throes He exhausts His soul. “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.” And then look! They pierce His side and forthwith runs out blood and water! This is the shedding of blood, sinners and saints. This is the awful shedding of blood, the terrible pouring out of blood without which for you and for the whole human race, there is no remission!

I have then, I hope, brought my text fairly out—without this shedding of blood there is no remission. Now I shall come to dwell upon it more particularly.

Why is it that this story does not make men weep? I told it weakly, you say. Yes, so I did. I will take all the blame. But, sirs, if it were told as weakly as men could speak, were our hearts what they should be, we should bleed away our lives in sorrow! Oh, it was a horrid murder! It was not an act of regicide. It was not the deed of a fratricide, or of a parricide. It was—what shall I say? I must make a word—a Deicide! The killing of a God—the slaying of Him who became incarnate for our sins! Oh, if our hearts were but soft as iron, we must weep! If they were but tender as the marble of the mountains, we would shed great drops of grief! But they are harder than the nether millstone. We forget the griefs of Him that died this ignominious death. We pity not His sorrows, nor do we account the interest we have in Him as though He suffered and accomplished all for us. Nevertheless, here stands the principle—“Without shedding of blood is no remission.” Now, I take it, there are two things here. First, there is *a negative expressed*—“No remission without shedding of blood.” And then there is *a positive implied*, indeed, with shedding of blood there IS remission!

I. First, I say, here is A NEGATIVE EXPRESSION—there is no remission without blood—without the blood of Jesus Christ! This is of divine authority. When I utter this sentence, I have divinity to plead. It is not a thing which you may doubt, or which you may believe. It *must be believed and received*, otherwise you have denied the Scriptures and turned aside from God. Some truths I utter, perhaps, have little better basis than my own reasoning and inference, which are of little enough value. But this I utter, not with quotations from God’s word to back up my assertion but from the lips of God Himself—here it stands in great letters, “There is no remission.” So divine is its authority, perhaps you will kick

at it—but remember, your rebellion is not against me, but against God! If any of you reject this truth, I shall not argue with you. God forbid I should turn aside from proclaiming His gospel to dispute with men! I have God's irrevocable statute to plead—here it stands—“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” You may believe or disbelieve many things the preacher utters. But this you disbelieve at the peril of your souls! It is God's utterance—will you tell God to His face you do not believe it? That were impious; the negative is divine in its authority—bow yourselves to it and accept its solemn warning!

But some men will say that God's way of saving men, by shedding of blood, is a cruel way, an unjust way, an unkind way. Sirs, I have nothing to do with your opinion of the matter. It is so. If you have any faults to find with your Maker, fight your battles out with Him! But take heed before you throw the gauntlet down! It will go ill with a worm when he fights with his Maker and it will go ill with you when you contend with Him! The doctrine of atonement, when rightly understood and faithfully received, is delightful, for it exhibits boundless love, immeasurable goodness and infinite truth. But to unbelievers it will always be a hated doctrine. So it must be, sirs. You hate your own mercies. You despise your own salvation! I tarry not to dispute with you—I affirm it in God's name—“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

And note how *decisive this is in its character*—“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” “But, sir, can't I get my sins forgiven by my repentance? If I weep and plead and pray, will not God forgive me for the sake of my tears?” “No remission,” says the text, “without shedding of blood.” “But, sir, if I never sin again, and if I serve God more zealously than other men, will He not forgive me for the sake of my obedience?” “No remission,” says the text, “*without shedding of blood.*” “But, sir, may I not trust that God is merciful, and will forgive me without the shedding of blood?” “No,” says the text, “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” None whatever! It cuts off every other hope. Bring your hopes here and if they are not based in blood and stamped with blood, they are as useless as castles in the air and dreams of the night! “There is no remission,” says the text, in positive and plain words. And yet men will be trying to get remission in 50 other ways, until their special pleading becomes as irksome to us as it is useless for them! Sirs, do what you like, say what you please, but you are as far off remission when you have done your best as you were when you began! Unless you put confidence in the shedding of our Savior's blood and in the blood-shedding alone, there is no remission!

And note again how *universal it is in its character*. “What? I may not get remission without blood-shedding?” says the king; and he comes with a crown on his head; “May not I in all my robes, with this rich ransom, get pardon without the blood-shedding?” “None,” is the reply. “None!” Then comes the wise man with a number of letters after his name—“Can I not get remission by these grand titles of my learning?” “None, none!” Then comes the benevolent man—“I have dispersed my money to the poor and given my bounty to feed them—shall not I get remission?” “None,” says the text, “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” How this puts everyone level! My Lord, you are no bigger than your

coachman. Sir, squire, you are no better off than John who plows the ground. Minister, your office does not serve you with any exemption—your poorest hearer stands on the very same footing! “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” No hope for the best, any more than for the worst, without this shedding of blood! Oh, I love the gospel, for this reason among others, because it is such a leveling gospel! Some persons do not like a leveling gospel; nor would I, in some senses of the word. Let men have their rank and their titles, and their riches if they will, but I like and I am sure all good men like to see rich and poor meet together and feel that they are on a level! The gospel makes them so. It says, “Put away your moneybags; they will not procure you remission; roll up your diploma; that will not get you remission. Forget your farm and your park; they will not get you remission. Cover up that escutcheon; that coat of arms will not get you remission! Come, you ragged beggars, filthy off-scouring of the world, penniless; come here, here is remission as much for you, ill-bred and ill-mannered though you are; as for the noble, the honorable, the titled and the wealthy; all stand on the same level here!” The text is universal—“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

Mark too, *how perpetual my text is*. Paul said, “There is no remission!” I must repeat this testimony, too. When thousands of years have rolled away, some minister may stand on this spot and say the same. This will never alter at all. It will always be so—in the next world as well as this—no remission without shedding of blood! “Oh yes there is,” says one, “the priest takes the shilling and he gets the soul out of purgatory!” That is a mere pretence. It never was in “purgatory!” But without shedding of blood there is no real remission. There may be tales and fancies, but there is no true remission without the blood of Propitiation. Never, though you strained yourselves in prayer. Never, though you wept yourselves away in tears. Never, though you groaned and cried till your heart-strings break! Never in this world, nor in that which is to come, can the forgiveness of sins be procured on any other ground than redemption by the blood of Christ! And never can the conscience be cleansed but by faith in that sacrifice. The fact is, beloved, there is no use for you to satisfy your hearts with anything less than what satisfied God the Father—without the shedding of blood nothing would appease His justice—and without the application of that same blood, nothing can purge your consciences!

II. But as there is no remission without blood-shedding, IT IS IMPLIED THAT THERE IS REMISSION WITH IT! Mark it well, this remission is a present fact! The blood having already been shed, the remission is already obtained! I took you to the garden of Gethsemane and the mount of Calvary to see the blood-shedding. I might now conduct you to another garden and another mount to show you the grand proof of the remission. Another garden, did I say? Yes, it is a garden filled with many pleasing and even triumphant reminiscences! Aside from the haunts of this busy world, in it was a new sepulcher, hewn out of a rock where Joseph of Arimathea thought his own poor body would presently be laid. But there they laid Jesus after His crucifixion.

He had stood Surety for His people and the law had demanded His blood—death had held Him with a strong grasp. And that tomb was, as it

were, the dungeon of His captivity, when, as the Good Shepherd, He laid down His life for the sheep! Why, then, do I see in that garden an open, untenanted grave? I will tell you. The debts are paid, the sins are cancelled, the remission is obtained! That great Shepherd of the sheep has been brought, again, from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant and in Him, also, we have obtained redemption through His blood! There, beloved, is the first proof!

Do you ask for further evidence? I will take you to Mount Olivet. You shall behold Jesus there with His hands raised like the High Priest of old to bless His people—and while He is blessing them, He ascends—the clouds receiving Him out of their sight. But why, you ask, oh why has He thus ascended and where is He gone? Behold He enters, not into the holy place made with hands but He enters into heaven, itself, with His own blood, there to appear in the presence of God for us. Now, therefore, we have boldness to draw near by the blood of Christ! The remission is obtained! Here is the second proof. Oh believer, what springs of comfort are there here for you!

And now let me commend this remission by the shedding of blood to those who have not yet believed. Mr. Innis, a great Scotch minister, once visited an infidel who was dying. When he came to him the first time, he said, “Mr. Innis, I am relying on the mercy of God. God is merciful and He will never damn a man forever.” When he got worse and was nearer death, Mr. Innis went to him again and he said, “Oh, Mr. Innis, my hope is gone, for I have been thinking if God is merciful, God is Just, too. And what if, instead of being merciful to me, He should be just to me? What would then become of me? I must give up my hope in the mere mercy of God. Tell me how to be saved!” Mr. Innis told him that Christ had died in the place of all believers—that God could be just and yet the justifier through the death of Christ. “Ah,” he said, “Mr. Innis, there is something solid in that! I can rest on that. I cannot rest on anything else.” And it is a remarkable fact that none of us ever met with a man who thought he had his sins forgiven unless it was through the blood of Christ. Meet a Muslim. He never had his sins forgiven. He does not say so. Meet an Infidel. He never knows that his sins are forgiven. Meet a Legalist. He says, “I hope they will be forgiven.” But he does not pretend they are. No one ever gets even a fancied hope apart from this—that Christ and Christ, alone, must save by the shedding of His blood.

Let me tell a story to show how Christ saves souls. Mr. Whitefield had a brother who had been like he, an earnest Christian, but he had backslidden. He went far from the ways of godliness. And one afternoon, after he had been recovered from his backsliding, he was sitting in a room in a chapel house. He had heard his brother preaching the day before and his poor conscience had been cut to the very quick. Said Whitefield’s brother, when he was at tea, “I am a lost man” and he groaned and cried and could neither eat nor drink. Said Lady Huntingdon, who sat opposite, “What did you say, Mr. Whitefield?” “Madam,” he said, “I said, ‘I am a lost man.’” “I’m glad of it,” she said, “I’m glad of it.” “Your Ladyship, how can you say so? It is cruel to say you are glad that I am a lost man.” “I repeat it, sir,” she said, “I am heartily glad of it.” He looked at her, more and more astonished at her barbarity. “I am glad of it,” said she, “be-

cause it is written, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." With the tears rolling down his cheeks, he said, "What a precious Scripture! And how is it that it comes with such force to me? Oh, Madam," he said, "Madam, I bless God for that! Then He *will* save *me*. I trust my soul in His hands. He has forgiven me." Shortly thereafter he went outside the house, felt ill, fell upon the ground, and died. I may have a lost man here this morning. As I cannot say much, I will leave you, good people; you do not need anything.

Have I got a lost man here? Lost man! Lost woman! Where are you? Do you feel yourself to be lost? I am so glad of it, for there is remission by the blood-shedding! O sinner, are there tears in your eyes? Look through them. Do you see that man in the garden? That man sweats drops of blood for you! Do you see that man on the cross? That man was nailed there for you! Oh, if I could be nailed on a cross this morning for you all, I know what you would do—you would fall down and kiss my feet and weep that I should have to die for you! But sinner, lost sinner, *Jesus* died for you—for YOU! And if He died for you, you cannot be lost—Christ died in vain for no one! Are you, then, a sinner? Are you convicted of sin because you believe not in Christ? I have authority to preach to you. Believe in His name, and you cannot be lost! Do you say you are not a sinner? Then I do not know that Christ died for you. Do you say that you have no sins to repent of? Then I have no Christ to preach to you! He did not come to save the righteous—He came to save the wicked! Are you wicked? Do you feel it? Are you lost? Do you know? Are you sinful? Will you confess it? Sinner, if Jesus were here this morning, He would put out His bleeding hands, and say, "Sinner, I died for you, will you believe Me?" He is not here in person—He has sent His servant to tell you. Won't you believe him? "Oh," but you say, "I am such a sinner!" "Ah," He says, "that is just why I died for you, because you are a sinner." "But," you say, "I do not deserve it." "Ah," He says, "that is just why I did it!" You say, "I have hated You." "But," He says, "I have always loved you." "But, Lord, I have spit on Your minister, and scorned Your word." "It is all forgiven," He says, "all washed away by the blood which did run from My side. Only believe Me; that is all I ask. And *that I will give you*. I will help you to believe." "Ah," says one, "but I do not need a Savior." Sir, I have nothing to say to you except this—"The wrath to come! The wrath to come!" But there is one who says, "Sir, you do not mean what you say! Do you mean to preach to the most wicked men or women in the place?" I mean what I say! There she is! She is a harlot; she has led many into sin, and many into hell. There she is; her own friends have turned her out of doors. Her father called her a good-for-nothing whore, and said she could never come to the house again! Woman! Do you repent? Do you feel yourself to be guilty? Christ died to save you, and you shall be saved! There he is. I can see him. He was drunk; he has been drunk very often. Not many nights ago I heard his voice in the street as he went home at a late hour on Saturday night, disturbing everybody. And he beat his wife, too; he has broken the Sabbath. And as to swearing, if oaths are like soot, his throat must need sweeping bad enough, for he has cursed God often! Do you feel yourself to be guilty, my hearer? Do

you hate your sins, and are you willing to forsake them? Then I bless God for you! Christ died for you. Believe!

I had a letter a few days ago from a young man who heard that during this week I was going to a certain town. He said, "Sir, when you come, please preach a sermon that will fit me, for do you know, sir, I have heard it said that we must all think ourselves to be the most wicked people in the world, or else we cannot be saved. I try to think so, but I cannot, because I have not been the most wicked; I want to think so, but I cannot. I want to be saved, but I do not know how to repent enough." Now, if I have the pleasure of seeing him, I shall tell him, God does not require a man to *think* himself the most wicked in the world, because that would sometimes be to think a lie. There are some men who are not as wicked as others are. What God requires is this—that a man should say, "I know more of myself than I do of other people. I know little about them, and from what I see of myself, not of my actions, but of my heart, I do think there can be few worse than I am. They may be guiltier openly, but then I have had more light, more privileges, more opportunities, more warnings, and therefore I am still guiltier." I do not want you to bring your brother with you and say, "I am more wicked than he is." I want you to come and say, "Father, I have sinned." You have nothing to do with your brother William—whether he has sinned more or less. Your cry should be, "Father, I have sinned!" You have nothing to do with your cousin Jane, whether or not she has rebelled more than you. Your business is to cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner!" That is all. Do you feel yourselves lost? Again, I say, —

"Come and welcome, sinner, come!"

To conclude. There is not a sinner in this place, who knows himself to be lost and ruined, who may not have all his sins forgiven, and "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." You may, though black as hell, be white as heaven this very instant! I know 'tis only by a desperate struggle that faith takes hold of the promise, but the very moment a sinner believes, that conflict is past! It is his first victory, and a blessed one. Let this verse be the language of your heart—adopt it, and make it your own—

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

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RAHAB'S FAITH

NO. 119

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 1, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them who believed not,
when she had received the spies with peace.”
Hebrews 11:31.***

IN almost every capital of Europe there are varieties of triumphal arches or columns upon which are recorded the valiant deeds of the country's generals, its emperors, or its monarchs. You will find, in one case, the thousand battles of a Napoleon recorded and, in another, you find the victories of a Nelson pictured. It seems, therefore, but right, that faith, which is the mightiest of the mighty, should have a pillar raised to its honor upon which its valiant deeds should be recorded! The Apostle Paul undertook to raise the structure and he erected a most magnificent pillar in the Chapter before us. It recites the victories of faith. It begins with one triumph of faith and then proceeds to others. We have, in one place, faith triumphing over *death*—Enoch entered not the gates of Hades but reached Heaven by another road from that which is usual to men. We have faith, in another place, wrestling with time—Noah, warned by God concerning things not seen as yet, wrestled with time, which placed his deluge a 120 years away. And yet, in the confidence of faith he believed against all rational expectation, against all probability—and his faith was more than a match for probability and time, too! We have faith triumphing over *infirmity*—when Abraham begot a son in his old age. And then we have faith triumphing over *natural affection* as we see Abraham climbing to the top of the hill and raising the knife to slay his only and beloved son at the command of God. We see faith, again, entering the lists with the infirmities of *old age* and the pains of the last struggle as we read—“By faith, Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph and worshipped leaning on the top of his staff.” Then we have faith combating the allurements of a wealthy court—“By faith Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” We see faith dauntless in courage when Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king and equally patient in suffering when he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. We have faith dividing seas and casting down strong walls. And then, as though the greatest victory

should be recorded last, we have faith entering the lists with sin, holding a tournament with iniquity and coming off more than a conqueror! "Rahab perished not with them who believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." That this woman was no mere hostess but a real harlot, I have abundantly proved to every candid hearer while reading the Chapter. I am persuaded that nothing but a spirit of distaste for Free Grace would ever have led any commentator to deny her sin.

I think this triumph of faith over sin is not the least here recorded, but that if there is any superiority ascribable to any one of Faith's exploits, this is, in some sense, the greatest of all. What? Faith, did you fight with hideous lust? What? Would you struggle with that fiery passion which sends forth flame from human breasts? What? Would you touch with your hallowed fingers foul and bestial debauchery? "Yes," says Faith, "I did encounter this abomination of iniquity, I delivered this woman from the loathsome chambers of vice, the wily snares of enchantment and the fearful penalty of transgression. Yes, I brought her off saved and rescued, gave her purity of heart and renewed in her the beauty of holiness. And now her name shall be recorded in the roll of my triumphs as a woman full of sin, yet saved by faith."

I shall have some things to say, this morning, concerning this notable victory of faith over sin such as I think will lead you to see that this was, indeed, a super-eminent triumph of faith. I will make my divisions alliterative, that you may remember them. This woman's faith was *saving* faith, *singular* faith, *stable* faith, *self-denying* faith, *sympathizing* faith and *sanctifying* faith. Let no one run away when I shall have expounded the first point and miss the rest, for you cannot apprehend the whole power of her faith unless you remember each of those particulars I am about to mention!

I. In the first place, this woman's faith was SAVING FAITH. All the other persons mentioned here were doubtless saved by faith. But I do not find it especially remarked concerning any of them that they perished not through their faith. While it is particularly said of this woman that she was *delivered* amidst the general destruction of Jericho, purely and only through her faith and, without doubt, her salvation was not merely of a temporal nature, not merely a deliverance of her body from the sword, but redemption of her soul from Hell! Oh, what a mighty thing faith is when it saves the soul from going down to the pit of Hell! So mighty is the ever-rushing torrent of sin that no arm but that which is as strong as Deity can ever stop the sinner from being hurried down to the gulf of black despair! And when nearing that gulf, so impetuous is the torrent of Divine Wrath that nothing can snatch the soul from Perdition but an

Atonement which is as Divine as God, Himself! Yet faith is the instrument of accomplishing the whole work. It delivers the sinner from the stream of sin and, laying hold upon the Omnipotence of the Spirit, it rescues him from that great whirlpool of destruction unto which his soul was being hurried.

What a great thing it is to save a soul! You can never know how great it is unless you have stood in the capacity of a savior to other men. Yonder heroic man who, yesterday, when the house was burning, climbed the creaking staircase and almost suffocated by the smoke, entered an upper chamber, snatched a baby from its bed and a woman from the window, bore them both down in his arms and saved them at the peril of his own life—he can tell you what a great thing it is to save a fellow creature! Yonder noble-hearted youth who, yesterday, sprang into the river at the hazard of himself and snatched a drowning man from death—he felt, when he stood upon the shore, what a great thing it is to save a life! Ah, but you cannot tell what a great thing it is to save a soul! It is only our Lord Jesus Christ who can tell you that, for He is the only One who has ever been the Savior of sinners! And remember, you can only know how great a thing faith is by knowing the infinite value of the salvation of a soul! Now, “By faith, the harlot Rahab was delivered.” That she was really saved in a Gospel sense as well as temporally seems to me to be proved from her reception of the spies which was an emblem of the entrance of the Word into the heart and her hanging out the scarlet thread was an evidence of faith, not inaptly picturing faith in the blood of Jesus, the Redeemer. But who can measure the length and breadth of that word—*Salvation*? Ah, it was a mighty deed which Faith accomplished when he bore her off in safety! Poor Sinner, take comfort! The same faith which saved Rahab can save you! Are you literally one of Rahab's sisters in guilt? She was saved and so may you be, if God shall grant you repentance. Woman, are you loathsome to yourself? Do you stand at this moment in this assembly and say, “I am ashamed to be here. I know I have no right to stand among people who are chaste and honest!” I bid you remain. Yes, come again and make this your Sabbath House of Prayer. You are no intruder! You are welcome! For you have a sacred right to the courts of mercy. You have a sacred right—for here sinners are invited and you are such! Believe in Christ and you, like Rahab, shall not perish with the disobedient but even you shall be saved!

And now there is some gentleman in the audience who says, “There's a Gospel for you. It is a kind of sanctuary for wicked men unto which the worst of people may run and be saved.” Yes, that is the stale objection which Celsus used against Origen in his discussion. “But,” said Origen,

“it is true, Celsus, that Christ’s Gospel is a sanctuary for thieves, robbers, murderers and harlots?” But know this, it is not merely a sanctuary, it is a hospital, too, for it heals their sins, delivers them from their diseases and they are not afterwards what they were before they received the Gospel! I ask no man, today, or any day, to come to Christ and then continue in his sins! If so, I would ask him to do an absurdity! As well might I talk of delivering a Prometheus, while his chains are allowed to remain upon him and bind him to his rock. It cannot be! Christ takes away the vulture from the conscience, but he takes away the chains, too, and makes the man wholly free when He does it at all! Yet, we repeat it again—the chief of sinners are as welcome to Christ as the best of saints! The fountain filled with blood was opened for sin-stained ones! The robe of Christ was woven for naked ones! The balm of Calvary was compounded for sick ones—life came into the world to raise the dead! And oh, you perishing and guilty souls, may God give you Rahab’s faith and you shall have this salvation and shall, with her, stand yonder where the white-robed, spotless hosts sing unending hallelujahs to God and the Lamb!

II. But mark, Rahab’s faith was a SINGULAR FAITH. The City of Jericho was about to be attacked. Within its walls there were hosts of people of all classes and characters and they knew right well that if their city should be sacked and stormed, they would all be put to death. But yet, strange to say, there was not one of them who repented of sin, or who even asked for mercy except this woman who had been a harlot. She and she, alone, was delivered—a solitary one among a multitude! Now, have you ever felt that it is a very hard thing to have a singular faith? It is the easiest thing in the world to believe as everybody else believes—the difficulty is to believe a thing, alone—when no one else thinks as you think—to be the solitary champion of a righteous cause when the enemy musters his thousands to the battle! Now this was the faith of Rahab. She had not one who felt as she did, who could enter into her feelings and realize the value of her faith. She stood alone. Oh, it is a noble thing to be the lonely follower of the despised Truth of God! There are some who could tell you a tale of standing up alone. There have been days when the world continually poured a river of infamy and calumny upon them, but they stemmed the torrent and, by continued Grace, were made strong in weakness! They held their own until the current turned and they, in their success, were praised and applauded by the very men who sneered before. Then did the world accord them the name of “great.” But where lay their greatness? Why, in this—that they stood as firm in the storm as they stood in the calm! That they were as content to serve God, alone, as they were to run by fifties. To be good, we must be singular. Christians

must swim against the stream. Dead fish always float down stream, but the living fish forces its way against the current!

Now, worldly religious men will go just as everybody else goes. That is nothing. The thing is to stand alone, like Elijah, when he said, "I only am left and they seek my life"—to feel in one's heart that we believe as firmly as if a thousand witnesses stood up by our side! Oh, there is no great right in a man, no strong-minded right, unless he dares to be singular! Why, the most of you are as afraid as you can be to be unfashionable! You spend more money than you ought because you think you must be respectable. You dare not move in opposition to your friends in the circle in which you move and, therefore, you involve yourselves in difficulties. You are blindfolded by the rich fabric of fashion and you tolerate many a wrong thing because it is customary. But a strong-minded man is one who does not try to be singular but who *dares* to be singular when he knows that to be singular is to be right. Now, Rahab's faith, sinner as she was, had this glory, this crown about its head, that she stood alone—"faithful among the faithless found."

And why should not God vouchsafe the same faith to you, my poor sinning but contrite Hearer? You live in a back street, in a house which contains none but Sabbath-breakers and irreligious men and women. But if you have Grace in your heart, you will dare to do right. You belong to an infidel club. If you should make them a speech after your own conscience, they would hiss you. And if you forsook their company, they would persecute you! Go and try them—dare them. See whether you can do it. For if you are afraid of men, you are taken in a snare which *may prove your* grief and *is now* your sin! Mark you, the chief of sinners can make the most daring saint. The worst men in the devil's army, when they are converted, make the truest soldiers for Jesus! The forlorn hope of Christendom has generally been led by men who have proven the high efficacy of Grace to an eminent degree by having been saved from the deepest sins. Go on and the Lord give you that high and singular faith!

III. Furthermore, this woman's faith was a STABLE FAITH which stood firm in the midst of trouble. I have heard of a Church clergyman who was once waited upon by his church warden, after a long time of drought and was requested to put up the prayer for rain. "Well," he said, "my good man, I will offer it, but it's not a bit of use while the wind's in the east, I'm sure." There are many who have that kind of faith—they believe just as far as probabilities go with them, but when the promise and the probability part, then they follow the probability and part with the promise! They say, "The thing is likely, therefore I believe it." But that is not faith—that is sight! True faith exclaims, "The thing is unlikely, yet I

believe it.” This is real faith! Faith is to say, “Mountains, when in darkness hidden, are as real as in day.” Faith is to look through that cloud, not with the eyes of sight, which see nothing, but with the eyes of faith, which see everything and to say, “I trust Him when I cannot trace Him. I tread the sea as firmly as I would the rock. I walk as securely in the tempest as in the sunshine and lay myself to rest upon the surging billows of the ocean as contentedly as upon my bed.” The faith of Rahab was the right sort of faith, for it was firm and enduring!

I will have a little talk with Rahab this morning, as I suppose old Unbelief did commune with her. Now, my good Woman, don't you see the absurdity of this thing? Why, the people of Israel are on the other side of Jordan and there is no bridge—how are they to get over? Of course they must go up higher towards the fords. And then Jericho will be for a long time, secure! They will take other cities before coming to Jericho. And besides, the Canaanites are mighty and the Israelites are only a parcel of slaves—they will soon be cut in pieces and that will be the end of them! So why do you harbor these spies? Why put your life in jeopardy for such an improbability? “Ah,” she says, “I do not care about the Jordan. My faith can believe across the Jordan, or else it were only a dry-land faith.” By-and-by they march through the Jordan dry shod, then faith gets firmer confidence. “Ah,” she says secretly within herself, what she would willingly have said to her neighbors, “Will you not *now* believe? Will you not *now* beg for mercy?” “No,” they say, “the walls of Jericho are strong—can the feeble host resist us?” And lo, on the morrow the troops are out and what do they do? They simply blow a number of rams' horns! Her neighbors say, “Why, Rahab, you do not mean to say you believe, now? They are mad!” The people just go round the city and all hold their tongues except the few priests blowing rams' horns. “Why, it is ridiculous! It were quite a new thing in warfare to hear of men taking a city by blowing rams' horns!” That was the first day. Probably the next day Rahab thought they would come with scaling ladders and mount the walls. But no, rams' home again, up to the seventh day—and this woman kept the scarlet thread in the window all the time—kept her father and mother and brothers and sisters in the house and would not let them go out. And on the seventh day, when the people made a great shout, the wall of the city fell flat to the ground!

Rahab's faith overcame her womanly timidity and she remained within, although the walls were tumbling to the ground! Only Rahab's house stood alone upon the wall, a solitary fragment amidst an universal wreck and she and her household were all saved. Now would you have thought that such a rich plant would grow in such poor soil—that strong faith

could grow in such a sinful heart as that of Rahab? Ah, but here it is that God exercises His great husbandry! "My Father is the Husbandman," said Christ. Any husbandman can get a good crop out of good soil. But God is the Husbandman who can grow cedars on rocks, who can not only put the hyssop upon the wall but put the oak there, too, and make the greatest faith spring up in the most unlikely position! All glory to His Grace! The greatest sinner may become great in faith. Be of good cheer, then, Sinner! If Christ should make you repent, you have no need to think that you shall be the least in the family. Oh, no—your name may yet be written among the mightiest of the mighty and you may stand as a memorable and triumphant instance of the power of faith!

IV. This woman's faith was A SELF-DENYING FAITH. She dared to risk her life for the sake of the spies. She knew that if they were found in her house she would be put to death! And though she was so weak as to do a sinful deed to preserve them, yet she was so *strong* that she would run the risk of being put to death to save these two men! It is something to be able to deny yourselves. An American once said, "I have got a good religion. Its the right sort of religion. I do not know that it costs me a cent a year! And yet I believe I am as truly a religious man as anybody." "Ah!" said one who heard it, "the Lord have mercy on your miserable stingy soul—for if you had been saved, you would not have been content with a cent a year." I hazard this assertion—that there is nothing in the faith of that man who does not exercise self-denial. If we never give anything to Christ's cause, work for Christ, deny ourselves for Christ, the root of the matter is not in us—I might call some of you hypocrites—you sing—

***"And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I could give Him all."***

Yes, you *could*, but you *would not*. You know better than that, for you do not, as it is, give all! No, nor even half, nor yet the thousandth part! I suppose you think you are poor, yourselves, though you have got some thousand pounds odd a year. And so you keep it yourself, under the notion that, "He that gives to the poor lends to the Lord." I don't know how else it is you make your religion square with itself and be at all consistent. This woman said, "If I must die for these men, I will. I am prepared, bad name as I have, to have a still worse name. As a traitor to my country, I am prepared to be handed down to infamy if it is necessary, but having betrayed my country in taking in these spies, I know it is God's will it should be done and do it I will at every hazard." O Brothers and Sisters, trust not your faith unless it has self-denial with it! Faith and self-denial, like the Siamese twins, are born together and must live

together—and the food that nourishes one must nourish both! But this woman, poor sinner as she was, would deny herself. She brought her life, even as that other woman who was a sinner brought the alabaster box of precious ointment, and broke it on the head of Christ!

V. Not to detain you too long, another point very briefly. This woman's faith was a SYMPATHIZING FAITH. She did not believe for herself, only. She desired mercy for her relations. She said, "I want to be saved, but that very desire makes me want to have my father saved and my mother saved and my brother saved and my sister saved." I know a man who walks seven miles every Sabbath to hear the Gospel preached at a certain place—a place where they preach *the* Gospel. You know that very particular, superfine sort—the Gospel—a Gospel, the spirit of which consists in bad temper, carnal security, arrogance and a seared conscience! But this man was one day met by a friend, who said to him, "Where is your wife?" "*Wife?*" he said to him. "What? Does she not come with you?" "Oh, no," said the man, "she never goes anywhere." "Well but," said he, "don't you try to get her and the children to go?" "No. The fact of it is, I think if I look to myself, that is quite enough." "Well," said the other, "and you believe you are God's elect, do you?" "Yes." "Well then," said the other, "I don't think you are, because you are worse than a heathen and a publican, for you don't care for your own household! Therefore I don't think you give much evidence of being God's elect. God's elect love their fellow-creatures." As sure as your faith is real, it will want to bring others in! You will say, "You want to make proselytes?" Yes. And you will reply that Christ said to the Pharisees, "You compass sea and land to make one proselyte." Yes, and Christ did not find fault with them for doing so! What He found fault with them for was this—"When you have found him, you make him ten-fold more the child of Hell than yourselves." The spirit of proselyting is the spirit of Christianity and we ought to be desirous of possessing it! If any man will say, "I believe such-and-such a thing is true, but I do not wish anyone else to believe it," I will tell you it is a lie! He does not believe it, for it is impossible, heartily and really, to believe a thing without desiring to make others believe the same!

And I am sure of this, moreover, it is impossible to know the value of salvation without desiring to see others brought in. Said that renowned preacher, Whitefield, "As soon as I was converted I wanted to be the means of the conversion of all that I had ever known! There were a number of young men that I had played cards with, that I had sinned with and transgressed with. The first thing I did was I went to their houses to see what I could do for their salvation, nor could I rest until I had the pleasure of seeing many of them brought to the Savior." This is a first

fruit of the Spirit. It is a kind of instinct in a young Christian—he must have other people feel what he feels! Says one young man, in writing to me this week, “I have been praying for my fellow clerk in the office. I have desired that he might be brought to the Savior but at present there is no answer to my prayers.” Do not give a penny for that man’s piety who will not spread itself! Unless we desire others to taste the benefits we have enjoyed, we are either inhuman monsters or outrageous hypocrites! I think the last is more likely. But this woman was so strong in faith that all her family were saved from destruction! Young woman, you have a father and he hates the Savior. Oh, pray for him! Mother, you have a son—he scoffs at Christ. Cry out to God for him! Yes, my Friends—young people like myself—we little know what we owe to the prayers of our parents! I feel that I shall never be sufficiently able to bless God for a praying mother! I thought it was a great nuisance to be had in at such a time to pray and, more especially, to be made to cry, as my mother used to make me cry. I would have laughed at the idea of anybody else talking to me about these things. But when she prayed and said, “Lord, save my son Charles,” and then was overcome and could not get any further for crying, you could not help crying, too. You could not help feeling—it was of no use trying to stand against it! Ah, and there you are, young man! Your mother is dying and one thing which makes her deathbed bitter is that you scoff God and hate Christ! Oh, it is the last stage of impiety when a man can think lightly of a mother’s feelings! I would hope there are none such here but that those of you who have been so blessed as to have been begotten and brought forth by pious men and women, may take this into consideration—that to perish with a mother’s prayers is to perish fearfully! For if a mother’s prayers do not bring us to Christ, they are like drops of oil dropped into the flames of Hell that will make them burn more fiercely upon the soul forever and ever! Take heed of rushing to Perdition over your mother’s prayers!

There is an old woman weeping—do you know why? I believe she, too, has sons, and she loves them. I met with a little incident in company the other day after preaching. There was a little boy at the corner of the table and his father asked him, “Why does your father love you, John?” Said the dear little lad, very prettily, “Because I am a good boy.” “Yes,” said the father, “he would not love you if you were not a good boy.” I turned to the good father and remarked that I was not quite sure about the truth of the last remark, for I believe he would love him if he were ever so bad. “Well,” he said, “I think I would.” And said a minister at the table, “I had an instance of that yesterday. I stepped into the house of a woman who had a son imprisoned for life and she was as full of her son, Richard, as

if he had been prime minister, or had been her most faithful and dutiful son.” Well, young man, will you kick against love like that—love that will bear your kicks and will not turn round against you but love you straight on still? But perhaps that woman—I saw her weep just now—had a mother who has gone long ago and she was married to a brutal husband and at last left a poor widow. She calls to mind the days of her childhood, when the big Bible was brought out and read around the hearth and, “Our Father which are in Heaven” was their nightly prayer. Now, perhaps, God is beginning some good thing in her heart. Oh, that He would bring her, now, though 70 years of age, to love the Savior! Then would she have the beginning of life over again in her last days, which will be made her best days!

VI. One more head and then we have done. Rahab's faith was a SANCTIFIED FAITH. Did Rahab continue a harlot after she had faith? No, she did not! I do not believe she was a harlot at the time the men went to her house, though the name still stuck to her, as such ill names will. But I am sure she was not afterwards, for Salmon, the prince of Judah, married her and her name is put down among the ancestors of our Lord Jesus Christ! She became after that a woman eminent for piety, walking in the fear of God. Now, you may have a dead faith which will ruin your soul. The faith that will save you is a faith which sanctifies. “Ah!” says the drunkard, “I like the Gospel, Sir. I believe in Christ.” Then tonight he will go over to the Blue Lion and get drunk. Sir, that is not the believing in Christ that is of any use. “Yes,” says another, “I believe in Christ.” And when he gets outside, he will begin to talk lightly, frothy words—perhaps lascivious ones and sin as before. Sir, you speak falsely—you do not believe in Christ. That faith which saves the soul is a real faith and a real faith sanctifies men! It makes them say, “Lord, you have forgiven me my sins. I will sin no more. You have been so merciful to me, I will renounce my guilt. So kindly have You treated me, so lovingly have You embraced me, Lord, I will serve You till I die. And if You will give me Grace and help me to be so, I will be as holy as You are.” You cannot have faith and yet live in sin. To believe is to be holy! The two things must go together. That faith is a dead faith, a corrupt faith, a rotten faith, which lives in sin that Grace may abound! Rahab was a sanctified woman. Oh that God might sanctify some that are here! The world has been trying all manner of processes to reform men—there is but one thing that will ever reform them and that is faith in the preached Gospel! But in this age, preaching is much despised. You read the newspaper. You read a book. You hear the lecturer. You sit and listen to the pretty essayist. But where is the preacher? Preaching is not taking out a manu-

script sermon, asking God to direct your heart and then reading pages prepared beforehand—that is reading—not preaching!

There is a good tale told of an old man whose minister used to read. The minister called to see him and said, “What are you doing, John?” Why, I’m prophesying, Sir.” “Prophesying? How is that? You mean you are reading the prophecies?” “No, I don’t. I’m prophesying. For you read preaching and call it preaching and I read prophecies and on the same rule, that is prophesying.” And the man was not far from right. We need to have more outspoken downright utterances of Truth of God and appeals to the conscience—and until we get these, we shall never see any great and lasting reform! But by the preaching of God’s Word, foolishness though it seems to some, harlots are made righteous, drunkards are reformed, thieves are made honest and the worst of men brought to the Savior! Again let me affectionately give the invitation to the vilest of men, if so they feel themselves to be—

***“Come you needy, come and welcome!
God’s free bounty glorify—
True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings us near —
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy!”***

COME! Your sins will be forgiven, your transgressions cast away and you shall go and sin no more, God having renewed you—and He will keep you even to the end! May God give His blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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A FAITHFUL FRIEND

NO. 120

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 8, 1857,
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”
Proverbs 18:24.

CICERO has well said, “Friendship is the only thing in the world concerning the usefulness of which all mankind are agreed.” Friendship seems as necessary an element of a comfortable existence in this world as fire or water, or even air, itself. A man may drag along a miserable existence in proud solitary dignity, but his life is scarcely a life. It is nothing but an existence, the tree of being, stripped of the leaves of hope and the fruits of joy. He who would be happy, must have friends. And he who would be happy hereafter, must, above all things, find a friend in the world to come, in the person of God, the Father of His people!

Friendship, however, though very pleasing and exceedingly blessed, has been the cause of the greatest misery to men when it has been unworthy and unfaithful. For just in proportion as a good friend is sweet, a false friend is full of bitterness. “A faithless friend is sharper than an adder’s tooth.” It is sweet to repose in someone but oh, how bitter to have that support snapped and to receive a grievous fall as the effect of your confidence! Fidelity is an absolute necessity in a true friend. We cannot rejoice in men unless they will stand faithful to us. Solomon declares that “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” That friend, I suppose, he never found in the pomp and vanities of the world. He had tried them all, but he found them empty. He passed through all their joys, but he found them, “vanity of vanities.” Poor Savage spoke from sad experience when he said—

*“You’ll find the friendship of the world a show—
 Mere outward show! ‘Tis like the harlot’s tears,
 The statesman’s promise, or false patriot’s zeal,
 Full of fair seeming, but delusion still.”*

And so for the most part they are. The world’s friendship is always brittle. Trust to it and you have trusted a robber. Rely upon it and you have leaned upon a thorn. Yes, worse than that, upon a spear which shall pierce you to the soul with agony! Yet Solomon says he had found, “a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Not in the haunts of his unbridled pleasures, nor in the wanderings of his unlimited researches but in

the pavilion of the Most High, the secret dwelling place of God—in the person of Jesus, the Son of God—the friend of sinners!

It is saying a great thing, to affirm that “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” For the love of brotherhood has produced most valiant deeds. We have read stories of what brotherhood could do, which, we think, could hardly be excelled in all the annals of friendship. Timoleon, with his shield, stood over the body of his slain brother to defend him from the insults of the foe. It was reckoned a brave deed of brotherhood that he should dare the spears of an army in defense of his brother’s corpse. And many such instances have there been, in ancient and modern warfare, of the attachment of brethren. There is a story told of two brothers in a Highland regiment, who, while marching through the Highlands, lost their way. They were overtaken by one of the terrible storms which will sometimes come upon travelers unawares—and blinded by the snow, they lost their way upon the mountains. Well near frozen to death, it was with difficulty they could continue their march. One man after another dropped into the snow and disappeared. There were two brothers, however, of the name of Forsythe, one of them fell prostrate on the earth and would have lain there to die but his brother, though barely able to drag his own limbs across the white desert, took him on his back and carried him along—as others fell one by one. This brave true-hearted brother carried his loved one on his back until at last he fell down, overcome with fatigue, and died. His brother, however, had received such warmth from his body that he was enabled to reach the end of his journey in safety and so lived. Here we have an instance of one brother sacrificing his life for another. I hope there are some brothers here who would be prepared to do the same if they should ever be brought into the same difficulty. It is saying a great thing to declare that, “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” It is putting that friend, first of all, in the list of loved ones. For surely, next to a mother’s love, there is and there ought to be no higher affection in the world than the love of a brother to one begotten of the same father and held on the same knee. Those who have, “Grown in beauty side by side and filled one house with glee,” ought to love one another! And we think there have been many glorious instances and mighty proofs of the love of brothers. Yet, says Solomon, “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

To repeat our assertion, we believe that this friend is the blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ. It shall be ours first, *to prove*, this morning, *the fact* that He sticks closer than a brother. Then as briefly as we can, to show you *why He sticks closer than a brother*. And then to finish up by giving you *some lessons which may be drawn from the doctrine* that Jesus Christ is a faithful friend.

I. First, then, beloved, we assert that CHRIST IS “A FRIEND THAT STICKS CLOSER THAN A BROTHER.” And in order to prove this from facts, we appeal to such of you as have had Him for a friend. Will you not, each of you, at once give your verdict that this is neither more nor less than an unexaggerated truth of God? He loved you before all worlds! Long before the day star flung his ray across the darkness, before the wings of angels had flapped the unnavigated ether, before anything of creation had struggled from the womb of nothingness, God, even our God, had set His heart upon all His children! Since that time, has He never swerved, has He once turned aside, once changed? No! You who have tasted of His love and know His grace will bear me witness that He has been a certain friend in uncertain circumstances—

***“He, near your side has always stood,
His loving-kindness, oh, how good!”***

You fell in Adam. Did He cease to love you? No. He became the second Adam to redeem you! You sinned in practice and brought upon your head the condemnation of God. You deserved His wrath and His utter anger. Did He then forsake you? No!—

***“He saw you ruined in the fall
Yet loved you notwithstanding all.”***

He sent His minister after you—you despised him. He preached the gospel in your ears—you laughed at him. You broke God’s Sabbath, you despised His Word. Did He then forsake you? No.—

***“Determined to save, he watched over your path
While Satan’s blind slave, you sported with death.”***

And at last He arrested you by His grace. He humbled you, He made you penitent, He brought you to His feet and He forgave all your sins! Since then, has He left you? You have often left Him—has He ever left you? You have had many trials and troubles—has He ever deserted you? Has He ever turned away His heart or shut up His heart of compassion? No, Children of God, it is your solemn duty to say, “No,” and bear witness to His faithfulness! You have been in severe afflictions and in dangerous circumstances—did your friend desert you then? Others have been faithless to you. He that eats bread with you has lifted up his heel against you. But has Christ ever forsaken you? Has there ever been a moment when you could go to Him and say, “Master, You have betrayed me”? Could you once, in the blackest hour of your grief, dare to question His fidelity? Could you dare say to Him, “Lord, You have promised what You did not perform”? Will you not bear witness now—“Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised. All has come to pass”? And do you fear He will yet forsake you? Ask, then, the bright ones before the throne—“You glorified spirits! Did Christ forsake you? You have passed through Jordan’s stream, did He leave you there? You have been baptized in the black flood of death, did He forsake you there? You have

stood before the throne of God—did He deny you?” And they answer, “No. Through all the troubles of our life, in all the bitterness of death, in all the agonies of our expiring moments and in all the terrors of God’s judgment, He has been with us, ‘a friend who sticks closer than a brother.’” Out of all the millions of God’s redeemed, there is not one He has forsaken! Poor they have been, mean and distressed, too, but He has never abhorred their prayer, never turned aside from doing them good! He has always been with them—

**“For His mercy shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.”**

But I shall stop on this point since I cannot prove this to the ungodly. But to the godly it is already proven—for they know it by experience! Therefore it is not necessary that I should do more than just certify the fact that Christ is a faithful friend—a friend in every hour of need and every time of distress!

II. And now I have to tell you THE REASONS WHY IT IS WE MAY DEPEND UPON CHRIST AS BEING A FAITHFUL FRIEND.

There are some things in Himself which render it certain that He will stick close to His people.

1. *True friendship can only be made between true men*, whose hearts are the soul of honor. There can be no lasting friendship between bad men. Bad men may pretend to love each other, but their friendship is a rope of sand which shall be broken at any convenient season. But if a man has a sincere heart within him and is true and noble, then we may confide in him. Spenser sings in fine old English verse—

**“Ne, certes can that friendship long endure,
However gay and goodly be the style,
That does ill cause or evil end enure,
For Vertue is the band that binds Harts most sure.”**

But who can find a stain in the character of Jesus, or who can tarnish His honor? Has there ever been a spot on His escutcheon? Has His flag ever been trampled in the dust? Does He not stand the true witness in heaven, the faithful and just? Is it not declared of Him that He is God who cannot lie? Have we not found Him so up to this moment? And may we not, knowing that He is, “Holy, holy, holy Lord,” confide in Him, knowing that He will stick closer to us than a brother? His goodness is the guarantee of His fidelity—He cannot fail us!

2. *Faithfulness to us in our faults* is a certain sign of fidelity in a friend. You may depend upon that man who will tell you of your faults in a kind and considerate manner. Fawning hypocrites, insidious flatterers are the sweepings and offal of friendship. They are but the parasites upon that noble tree. But true friends put enough trust in you to tell you openly of your faults. Give me for a friend the man who will speak honestly of me before my face—who will not tell first one neighbor and then another but

who will come straight to my house and say, “Sir, I feel there is such-and-such a thing in you, which, as my brother, I must tell you of”—that man is a true friend! He has proven himself to be so, for we never get any praise for telling people of their faults, we rather hazard their dislike! A man will sometimes thank you for it, but he does not often like you any the better. Praise is a thing we all love. I met with a man the other day who said he was impervious to flattery. I was walking with him at the time and turning round rather sharply, I said, “At any rate, sir, you seem to have a high gift in flattering yourself, for you are really doing so, in saying you are impervious to flattery.” “You cannot flatter me,” he said. I replied, “I can if I like to try and, perhaps, may do so before the day is out.” I found I could not flatter him directly, so I began by saying what a fine child that was of his. And he drank it in as a precious draught! And when I praised this thing and that belonging to him, I could see that he was very easily flattered. Not directly but indirectly. We are all pervious to flattery. We like the soothing cordial, only it must not be *labeled* flattery, for we have a religious abhorrence of flattery if it is so called—call it by any other name and we drink it in, even as the ox drinks in water! Now, child of God, has Christ ever flattered you? Has He not told you of your faults right truly? Has He not pricked your conscience even upon what you thought to gloss over—your little secret sins? Has He not provoked conscience to thunder in your ears notes of terror because of your misdeeds? Well, then, you may trust Him, for He shows that faithfulness which renders a man right trustworthy! Thus I have pointed out to you that there are reasons in Himself for which we may trust Him.

3. In the next place, *there are some things in His friendship which render us sure of not being deceived when we put our confidence in Him.* True friendship must not be of hasty growth. As quaint old Master Fuller says, “Let friendship creep gently to a height. If it rushes to it, it may soon run itself out of breath.” It is even so. I think it was Joanna Baillie said—

***“Friendship is no plant of hasty growth.
Though planted in esteem’s deep fixed soil,
The gradual culture of kind growth
Must bring it to perfection.”***

In vain do you trust the gourd over your head, O Jonah! It will not be of much use to you. It came up in a night—it may wither in a night. It is the strong stiff oak of ages growth which shall abide the tempest—which shall alike put out its wings to shield you from the sun and shall afterwards find you a hovel in its heart, if necessary, in its gray old age, when its branches tremble in the blast. Friendship is true when it begins—but we must have a man’s friendship long before we can say of him that he will stick closer than a brother! And how long has Christ loved you? That you cannot tell. When the ages were not born, He loved you. When this world was an infant, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of mist, He loved

you. When the old pyramids had not begun to be built, His heart was set upon you. And ever since you have been born He has had a strong affection for you. He looked on you in your cradle and He loved you then. He was betrothed to you when you were an infant of a span long and He has loved you ever since. Some of you I see with gray hairs, some with heads all bald with age. He has loved you up till now and will He now forsake you? Oh, no, His friendship is so old that it will last! It has been matured by so many tempests, it has been rooted by so many winds of trouble that it cannot but endure, it will stand! The granite peak of the mountain shall not be melted because, unlike the young snow, it has braved the blast and borne the heat of the burning sun. It has always stood out, catching in its face every blow from the fist of nature and yet been unmoved and uninjured. It shall last, for it has lasted! But when the elements shall melt and in a stream of dissolving fire shall run away, then shall Christ's friendship still exist, for it is of older growth than they! He is "a friend who sticks closer than a brother." His friendship is an ancient friendship—ancient as His own head of which it is said, "His head and His hair are white like snow, as white as wool."

4. But note, further, *the friendship which will last does not make its rise in the chambers of mirth, nor is it fed and fattened there.* Young lady, you speak of a dear friend whom you acquired last night in a ballroom. Do not, I beseech you, misuse the word! He is not a friend if he was acquired there. Friends are better things than those which grow in the hot-house of pleasure. Friendship is a more lasting plant than those. You have a friend, have you? Yes, and he keeps a pair of horses and has a good establishment. Ah, but your best way to prove your friend is to know that he will be your friend when you have not so much as a mean cottage. And when houseless and without clothing, you are driven to beg your bread. Thus you would make true proof of a friend. Give me a friend who was born in the winter time, whose cradle was rocked in the storm. He will last. Our fair-weather friends shall flee from us. I had rather have a robin for a friend than a swallow, for a swallow abides with us only in the summer, but a robin comes to us in the winter. Those are tight friends who will come the nearest to us when we are in the most distress—but those are not friends who speed themselves away when bad times come! Believer, have you reason to fear that Christ will leave you? Has He not been with you in the house of mourning? You found your friend where men find pearls, "In caverns deep, where darkness dwells." You found Jesus in your hour of trouble. It was on the bed of sickness that you first learned the value of His name. It was in the hour of mental anguish that you first laid hold of the hem of His garment. And since then, your nearest and sweetest friendship has been held with Him in hours of darkness. Well, then, such a friend, proved in the house of sor-

row—a friend who gave His heart’s blood for you and let His soul run out in one great river of gore—such a friend never can and never will forsake you! He sticks closer than a brother.

5. Again, *a friend who is acquired by folly is never a lasting friend*. Do a foolish thing and make a man your friend—‘tis but a confederacy in vice and you will soon discover that his friendship is worthless! The friendships you acquire by doing wrong, you had better be without! Oh, how many silly friendships there are springing up, the mere fruit of sentimentalism, having no root whatever but like the plant of which our Savior tells us, “It sprang up because it had no depth of earth”? Jesus Christ’s friendship is not like that! There is no ingredient of folly in it. He loves us discreetly, not winking or conniving at our follies, but instilling into us His wisdom. His love is wise. He has chosen us according to the counsel of His wisdom. Not blindly and rashly but with all judgment and prudence!

Under this head I may likewise observe that *the friendship of ignorance is not a very desirable one*. I desire no man to call himself my friend if he does not know me. Let him love me in proportion to his knowledge of me. If he loves me for the little he knows, when he knows more he may cast me aside. “That man,” says one, “seems to be a very amiable man.” “I am sure I can love him,” says another, as he scans his features. Yes, but do not write, “friend,” yet! Wait a wee bit, until you know more of him! Just see him, examine him, try him, test him and not till then enter him on the sacred list of friends. Be friendly to all but make none your friends until they know you and you know them! Many a friendship born in the darkness of ignorance has died suddenly in the light of a better acquaintance with each other. You supposed men to be different from what they were and when you discovered their real character, you disregarded them. I remember one saying to me, “I have great affection for you, sir,” and he mentioned a certain reason. I replied, “My dear fellow, your reason is absolutely false. The very thing you love me for, I am not and hope I never shall be!” And so I said, “I really cannot accept your friendship if it is founded upon a misunderstanding of what I may have said.” But our Lord Jesus never can forsake those whom once He loves because He can discover nothing in us worse than He knew, for He knew all about us beforehand! He saw our leprosy and yet He loved us. He knew our deceitfulness and unbelief and yet He did press us to His bosom. He knew what poor fools we were and yet He said He would never leave us nor forsake us. He knew that we would rebel against Him and often despise His counsel. He knew that even when we loved Him, our love would be cold and languid. But He loved for His own sake. Surely, then, He will stick closer than a brother!

6. Yet again, *friendship and love, to be real, must not lie in words but in deeds.* The friendship of bare compliments is the fashion of this age because this age is the age of deceit! The world is the great house of sham! Go where you may in London—sham is staring you in the face! There are very few real things to be discovered. I allude not merely to tricks in business, adulterations in food and such like—deception is not confined to the tradesman’s shop—it prevails throughout society! The sanctuary is not exempt. The preacher adopts a sham voice. You hardly ever hear a man speak in the pulpit in the same way he would speak in the parlor. Why, I hear my brothers, sometimes, when they are at tea or dinner, speak in a very comfortable decent sort of English voice. But when they get into their pulpits, they adopt a sanctimonious tone and fill their mouths with inflated utterance, or else whine most pitifully! They degrade the pulpit by pretending to honor it—speaking in a voice which God never intended any mortal to have! This is the great house of sham. And such little things show which way the wind blows. You leave your card at a friend’s house. That is an act of friendship—the card? I wonder whether, if he were hard up for cash, you would leave your banker’s book? You write, “My dear Sir,” “Yours very truly”—it is a sham—you do not mean it! “Dear,” that is a sacred word. It ought to be used to none but those you regard with affection. But we tolerate lies, now, as if they were truths. And we call them courtesies. Courtesies they may be, but they are lies in many cases! Now, Christ’s love lies not in words, but in deeds. He says not, “My dear people.” But He let His heart out, and we could see what that was! He does not come to us and simply say, “Dearly beloved.” But He hangs upon the cross and there we read, “Dearly beloved,” in red letters! He does not come to us with the kisses of His lips first—He gives us blessings with both His hands, He gives Himself *for* us and *then* He gives Himself to us. Trust no complimentary friend! Rely upon the man who gives you real tokens worth having, who does deeds for you to show the truthfulness of his heart! Such a friend—and such is Jesus—“sticks closer than a brother.”

7. Once more and I trust I shall not weary you. *A purchased friend will never last long.* Give to a man 19 times, but deny him the 20th and he shall hate you, for his love sprang only from your gifts! The love which I could buy for gold, I would sell for dross. The friendship that I could buy for pearls, I would dispense with for pebbles. It is of no value and, therefore, the sooner lost, the better! But oh, believer, Christ’s love was unpurchased love! You brought Him no presents. Jacob said, when his sons went to Egypt, “Take the man a present, a little oil, a little balm, a few nuts and almonds,” but you took Christ no presents! When you came to Him, you said—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling.”***

You did not even promise that you would love Him, or you had such a faithless heart, you dared not say so! You asked Him to make you love Him—that was the most you could do. He loved you for nothing at all—simply because He would love you! That love which so lived on nothing but its own resources will not starve through the scantiness of your returns. The love which grew in such a rocky heart as this will not die for lack of soil. That love which sprang up in the barren desert in your soul will never, never die for lack of moisture! It must live, it cannot expire. Jesus is, “a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

8. Shall I continue to urge more reasons? I may but mention one other, namely, this—that *there cannot, by any possibility, arise any cause which could make Christ love us less.* You say, “How is that?” One man loves his friend, but he all of a sudden grows rich and now he says, “I am a greater man than I used to be. I shall forget my old acquaintances.” But Christ can grow no richer—He is as rich as He can be, infinitely so! He loves you now—then it cannot be possible that He will by reason of an increase in His own personal glory forsake you, for everlasting glories now crown His head! He can never be more glorious and great and, therefore, He will love you always. Sometimes, on the other hand, one friend grows poorer and then the other forsakes him. But you never can grow poorer than you are, for you are “a poor sinner and nothing at all.” Now, you have nothing of your own—all you have is borrowed—all given you by Him. He cannot love you, then, less, because you grow poorer, for poverty that has nothing is at least as poor as it can be and can never sink lower in the scale! Christ, therefore, loves you for all your nakedness and all your poverty!

“But I may prove sinful,” you say. Yes, but you cannot be more so than He foreknew you would be and yet He loved you with the foreknowledge of all your sins! Surely, then, when it happens, it will occasion no surprise to Him. He knew it all beforehand and He cannot swerve from His love. No circumstance can possibly arise that ever will divide the Savior from His love to His people and the saint from his love to his Savior. He is “a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

III. Now then, AN INFERENCE TO BE DERIVED FROM THIS. Lavater says, “The qualities of your friends will be those of your enemies—cold friends, cold enemies; half-friends, half-enemies—fervid enemies, warm friends.” Knowing this is true, I have often congratulated myself when my enemies have spoken freely against me. “Well,” I have thought, “My friends love me hard and fast. The enemies can be as hot as they please. It only indicates that the friends are proportionately firm in affection.” Then we draw this inference—that if Christ sticks close and He is our friend—then our enemies will stick close and never leave us till we die. Oh, Christian, because Christ sticks close, the devil will stick close, too—

he will be at you and with you! The dog of hell will never cease his howling till you reach the other side of Jordan. No place in this world is out of bow-shot of that great enemy! Until you have crossed the stream, his arrows can reach you and they will—if Christ gave Himself for you, the devil will do all he can to destroy you! If Christ has been long-suffering to you, Satan will be persevering, in hopes that Christ may forget you. He will strive after you and strive until he shall see you safely landed in heaven. But be not disappointed, the louder Satan roars, the more proof you shall have of Christ's love! "Give me," said old Rutherford, "give me a roaring devil rather than a sleeping one, for sleeping devils make me slumber but roaring ones provoke me to run to my Master." Oh, be glad, then, if the world rants at you, if your foes attack you fiercely—Christ is just as full of love to you as they are of hatred! Therefore—

"Be firm and strong—

Be grace your shield, and Christ your song."

And now I have a question to ask—that question I ask of every man and every woman in this place and of every child, too—Is Jesus Christ your friend? Have you a friend at court—at heaven's court? Is the Judge of the quick and the dead your friend? Can you say that you love Him and has He ever revealed Himself in the way of love to you? Dear hearer, do not answer that question for your neighbor! Answer it for yourself. Peer or peasant, rich or poor, learned or illiterate—this question is for each of you! Therefore, ask it—"Is Christ my friend?" Did you ever consider that question? Have you ever asked it? Oh, to be able to say, "Christ is my friend," is one of the sweetest things in the world! A man who had lived much in sin, one day casually entered a place of worship. Before the sermon, this hymn was sung—

"Jesus, lover of my soul."

The next day the man was met by an acquaintance who asked him how he liked the sermon. He said, "I do not know, but there were two or three words that took such a hold of me that I did not know what to do with myself. The minister read that hymn, 'Jesus, lover of my soul.' Ah," he said, though he was by no means a religious man—"to be able to say that, I would give up all I have! But do you think," he asked, "that Jesus ever will be the lover of such a man as I am? 'Jesus, lover of my soul!' Oh, could I say it?" And then he buried his head in his hands and wept. I have every reason to fear that he went back to his sin and was the same afterwards as before. But you see, he had a conscience enough to let him know how valuable it was to have Christ for his love and his friend. Ah, rich man, you have many friends! There are some here who have learned the faithlessness of friends. Oh, put no confidence, you great men and you rich, in the adherence of your friends! David said in his haste, "All men are liars." You may one day have to say it at your leisure! And oh, you kind and affectionate hearts who are not rich in wealth but who are

rich in love—and that is the world’s best wealth—put this golden coin among your silver ones and it will sanctify them all! Get Christ’s love shed abroad in your hearts and your mother’s love, your daughter’s love, your husband’s love, your wife’s love will become sweeter than ever! The love of Christ casts not out the love of relatives, but it sanctifies our loves and makes them far sweeter! Remember, dear hearer, the love of men and women is very sweet, but all must pass away and what will you do if you have no wealth but the wealth that fades and no love but the love which dies, when death shall come? Oh, to have the love of Christ! You can take that across the river death with you! You can wear it as your bracelet in heaven and set it up as a seal upon your hand, for His love is “strong as death and mightier than the grave.” Good old Bishop Beveridge, I think it was, when dying, did not know his best friends. Said one, “Bishop Beveridge, do you know me?” Said he, “Who are you?” And when the name was mentioned, he said, “No.” “But don’t you know your wife, Bishop?” “What is her name?” he said. She said, “I am your wife.” “I did not know I had one,” said he. Poor old man! His faculties all failed him! At last someone stooped down and whispered, “Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?” “Yes,” he said, making an effort to speak, “I have known Him these 40 years, and I never can forget Him.” It is marvelous how memory will hold the place with Jesus, when it will with no one else! And it is equally marvelous that—

***“When all created streams are dry,
Christ’s fullness is the same.”***

My dear hearers, do think about this matter. Oh, that you might get Christ for your friend! He will never be your friend while you are self-righteous. He will never be your friend while you live in sin. But do you believe yourselves guilty? Do you desire to leave off sin? Do you want to be saved? Do you desire to be renewed? Then let me tell you, my Master loves you! Poor, weak and helpless worms, my Master’s heart is full of love for you! His eyes at this moment are looking down with pity on you! “Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem!” He now bids me tell you that He died for all of you who confess yourselves to be sinners and feel it. He bids me say to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” He tells me to proclaim salvation full and free—full, needing nothing of yours to help it. free, needing nothing of yours to buy it—

***“Come, you thirsty, come and welcome!
God’s free bounty glorify—
True belief and true repentance
Every grace that brings us near —
Without money
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”***

There is nothing I feel that I fail so much in as addressing sinners. Oh, I wish I could cry my heart out and preach my heart out to you and at you!—

***“Dear Savior, draw reluctant hearts!
To you let sinners fly
And take the bliss Your love imparts—
And drink and never die!”***

Farewell, with this one thought—we shall never, all of us, meet together here again. It is a very solemn thought but according to the course of nature and the number of deaths, if all of you were willing to come here next Sabbath morning, it is not at all likely that all of you would be alive! One out of this congregation will be sure to have gone the way of all flesh. Farewell, you that are appointed to death, I know not who you are—yonder strong man, or yonder tender maiden with the hectic flush of consumption on her cheek. I know not who is appointed to death. But I do now most solemnly take my farewell of such a one. Farewell poor soul—and is it farewell forever? Shall we meet in the land of the hereafter, in the home of the blessed, or do I now bid you farewell forever? I do solemnly bid farewell to you forever if you live and die without Christ. But I cannot bear that dreary thought! And I therefore say, poor sinner, stop and consider! Consider your ways and now—“turn you, turn you, why will you *die*?” “Why will *you* die?” “Why *will* you die?” “Why will you die?” Ah, you cannot answer that question! May God help you to answer it in a better fashion, by saying—

***“Here, Lord!
Just as I am, without one plea
But that Your blood was shed for me,
O Son of God, I come to Thee!”***

The Lord bless you all for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE LEAFLESS TREE

NO. 121

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MARCH 8, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

***“But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten, as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”
Isaiah 6:13.***

OUR first business tonight will be briefly to explain the metaphor employed in the text. The prophet was told that despite all the reproofs he was instructed to deliver and, notwithstanding the eloquent earnestness of his lips, which had been just touched with a live coal from off the altar, still the people of Israel would persevere in their sins and would, therefore, be certainly destroyed! He asked the question, “Lord, how long?” that is, “How long will the people be thus impenitent? How long will Your sore judgment thus continue?” And he was informed that God would waste and destroy the cities and their inhabitants till the land should be utterly desolate. Then it was added, for his comfort, “Yet in it shall be a tenth.” And so it happened, for when “Nebuchadnezzar carried away all Jerusalem,” the historian gives this reservation—“none remained save the poorer sort of the people of the land.” They were left by the captain of the guard, “to be vinedressers and farmers.” Thus in it there was a tenth. This small remnant of the people, however, was to be nearly destroyed, too! “It shall return and shall be eaten.” The sense is eaten up or consumed. The poor creatures left in the land, many of them, fled into Egypt at the time of the conspiracy of Ishmael, (not Ishmael, the son of Hagar but an unworthy member of the royal family of Judah). And there in Egypt most of them were cut off and perished. “But,” says God, “although only this tenth shall be preserved and then even this small part shall be subjected to many perils, yet Israel shall not be destroyed, for it shall be as a teil tree, and as an oak.” Their “substance is in them, when they cast their leaves” and so lose their verdure and their beauty. Thus in like manner, a holy seed, a chosen remnant, shall still be the substance of the children of Israel when the fruitful land is stripped of its foliage and that fair garden of earth is barren as the desert.

The figure is taken, first of all, from the terebinth or turpentine tree—here translated the *teil tree*. That tree is an evergreen, with this excep-

tion, that in very severe and inclement weather, it loses its leaves. But even then the terebinth tree is not dead. And so the oak—it loses its leaves every year, of course, but even then it is not dead. “So,” says God, “you have seen the tree in winter standing naked and bare, without any sign of life. Its roots are buried in the hard and frozen soil and its naked branches exposed to every blast, without a bloom or a bud. Yet the substance is in the tree when the leaves are gone. It is still alive and it shall, by-and-by, in due season bud and bloom.” “So,” He says, “Nebuchadnezzar shall cut off all the leaves of the tree of Israel—take away the inhabitants—only a tenth shall be left and they shall well-near be eaten up! But still the church of God and the Israel of God never shall be destroyed—they shall be like the terebinth tree and the oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves! So the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

I hope I have made the meaning of the passage as plain as words can make it. Now, then, for the application—first, *to the Jews*; secondly, *to the Church*; thirdly, *to each believer*.

I. First, TO THE JEWS.

What a history is the history of the Jew! He has antiquity stamped upon his forehead. His is a lineage more noble than that of any knight or even king of this island, for he can trace his pedigree back to the very loins of Abraham! And through him to that patriarch who entered into the ark and from there to Adam, himself. Our history is hidden in gloom and darkness—but theirs, with certainty, may be read from the first moment even down till now. And what a checkered history has been the history of the Jewish nation! Nebuchadnezzar seemed to have swept them all away with the huge broom of destruction. The tenth left was again given over to the slaughter and one would have thought we would have heard no more of Israel. But in a little time they rose, phoenix-like, from their ashes! A second temple was built and the nation became strong, once more, though often swept with desolations. In the meantime it did abide—the scepter did not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet—until Shiloh came! And, since then, how huge have been the waves that have rushed over the Jewish race! The Roman emperor razed the city to the ground and left not a vestige standing. Another emperor changed the name of Jerusalem into that of Elijah and forbade a Jew to go within some miles of it, so that he might not even look upon his beloved city! It was plowed and left desolate. But is the Jew conquered? Is he a subjugated man? Is his country seized? No, he is still one of earth’s nobles—distressed, insulted, spit upon—still it is written, “To the Jew first and afterwards to the Gentile.” He claims a high dignity above us and he has a history to come which will be greater and more

splendid than the history of any nation that has yet existed! If we read the Scriptures aright, the Jews have a great deal to do with this world's history! They shall be gathered in. Messiah shall come, the Messiah they are looking for—the same Messiah who came once, shall come again—shall come as they expected Him to come the first time. They then thought He would come a prince to reign over them and so He will when He comes again. He will come to be King of the Jews and to reign over His people most gloriously. For when He comes, Jew and Gentile shall have equal privileges, though there shall yet be some distinction afforded to that royal family from whose loins Jesus came, for He shall sit upon the throne of His father, David, and unto Him shall be gathered all nations—

***“You chosen seed of Israel’s race,
A remnant weak and small”***

You may, indeed—

***“Hail Him who saves you by His grace,
And crown Him Lord of all.”***

Your church shall never die and your race shall never become extinct! The Lord has said it. “The race of Abraham shall endure forever and his seed as many generations.”

But why is it that the Jewish race is preserved? We have our answer in the text—“The holy seed is the substance thereof.” There is something mysterious within a tree—hidden and unknown which preserves life in it when everything outward tends to kill it. So in the Jewish race there is a secret element which keeps it alive. We know what it is. It is the “remnant according to the election of grace.” In the worst of ages there has never been a day so black but there was a Hebrew found to hold the lamp of God! There has always been found a Jew who loved Jesus! And though the race now despises the great Redeemer, yet there are not a few of the Hebrew race who still love Jesus, the Savior of the uncircumcised, and bow before Him. It is these few, this holy seed, that are the substance of the nation and for their sake, through their prayers, because of God's love to them, He still says of Israel to all nations, “Touch not these My anointed, do My prophets no harm. These are the descendants of Abraham, My friend. I have sworn and will not repent. I will show kindness unto them for their father's sake and for the sake of the remnant I have chosen.”

Let us think a little more of the Jews than we have been likely. Let us pray more often for them. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love her.” As truly as any great thing is done in this world for Christ's kingdom, the Jews will have more to do with it than any of us have dreamed! So much for the first point. The Jewish nation is like “a

teil tree, and as an oak whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

II. And now, secondly, THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, whereof the Jewish people are but a dim shadow and an emblem.

The church has had its trials—trials from without and trials within. It has had days of blood-red persecution and of fiery trial. It has had times of sad apostasy, when an evil heart of unbelief and departing from the living God has broken out and a root of bitterness springing up has troubled many and, thereby, they have been defiled. Yet, blessed be God, through all the winters of the church, she still lived and she now gives signs of a sweeter springtide, a fresher greenness and a healthier condition than she has shown before for many a day! Why is it that the church is still preserved, when she looks so dead? For this reason—that there is in the midst of her, though many are hypocrites and impostors—a “chosen seed,” who are the “substance thereof.” You might have looked back a hundred years ago upon the professing church of Christ in this land and what a sad spectacle it would have exhibited! In the Church of England there was mere formality. In the Independent and Baptist denominations there was truth but it was dead, cold, lifeless truth. Ministers dreamed on in their pulpits and hearers snored in their pews—infidelity was triumphant. The House of God was neglected and desecrated. The church was like a tree that had lost its leaves—it was in a wintry state. But did it die? No! There was a holy seed within it. Six young men were expelled from Oxford for praying, reading the Bible and talking to poor people about Christ. And these six young men, with many others whom the Lord had hidden by fifties in the caves of the earth, secret and unknown—these young men, leaders of a glorious revival, came out! And though ridiculed and laughed at as Methodists, they brought forth a great and glorious revival, almost equaling the commencement of the gospel triumphs under Paul and the apostles, and very little inferior to the great reformation of Luther, of Calvin and Zwingli! And just now the church is, to a great degree, in a barren and lifeless state. But will she therefore die? You say that true doctrine is scarce, that zeal is rare, that there is little life and energy in the pulpit and true devotion in the pew, while formality and hypocrisy stalk over us and we sleep in our cradles. But will the church die? No! She is like a teil tree and an oak. Her substance is in her when she has lost her leaves. There is still a holy seed in her that is the substance thereof! Where these are, we know not. Some, I doubt not, are here in this church—some, I hope, are to be found in every church of professing Christians—and woe the day to the church that loses her holy seed, for she must die, like the oak blasted by the light-

ning whose heart is scorched out of it—broken down because it has got no *substance* in it!

Let me now draw your attention, as a church connected with this place, to this point—that the holy seed is the substance of the church. A great many of you might be compared to the bark of the tree. Some of you are like the big limbs. Others are like pieces of the trunk. Well, we should be very sorry to lose any of you, but we could afford to do so without any serious damage to the life of the tree! Yet there are *some* here—God knows who they are—who are the substance of the tree. By the word, “substance,” is meant the *life*, the inward principle. The inward principle is in the tree when it has lost its leaves. Now God discerns some men in this church, I doubt not, who are towards us like the inward principle of the oak—they are the substance of the church. I would gladly hope that all the members of the church, in some degree, contribute to the substance, but I cannot think so. I am obligated to say I doubt it, because, when one has fallen and another, it makes us remember that a church has much in it that is not life. There are some branches on the vine that are cut off because they do not draw sap from the heart of it—they are only branches bound on by profession. They are pretended graftings that have never struck root into the parent stock and that must be cut off and hewn down and cast into the fire—but there is a holy seed in the church that is the substance of it!

Please note here that the life of a tree is not determined by the shape of the branches, nor by the way it grows, but it is the *substance*. The shape of a church is not its life! In one place I see a church formed in an Episcopalian shape. In another place I see one formed in a Presbyterian shape. Then, again, I see one like ours, formed on an Independent principle. Here I see one with 16 ounces to the pound of doctrine. There I see one with eight and some with very little clear doctrine at all! And yet I find life in all the churches, in some degree—some good men in all of them! How do I account for this? Why, just in this way—that the oak may be alive, whatever its shape, if it has got the *substance*. If there is but a holy seed in the church, the church will live! And it is astonishing how the church will live under a thousand errors if there is but the vital principle in it! You will find good men among the denominations that you cannot receive as being sound in faith. You say, “What? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” And you go through and find there are even in them some true Nazirites of the right order! The very best of men found in the worst of churches! A church lives not because of its rubrics and its canons and its articles—it lives because of the holy seed that is in it as the substance! No church can die while it has got a holy seed in it

and no church can live that has *not* got the holy seed, for “the holy seed is the substance thereof.”

Observe, again, that the substance of the oak is a hidden thing—you cannot see it. When the oak or the terebinth is standing destitute of leaves, you know that life is there somewhere. But you cannot see it. And very likely you cannot and do not know the men who are the holy seed, the substance of the church. Perhaps you imagine the substance of the church lies in the pulpit. No, friend! Let us pray to God that such of us as are in the pulpit may be a part of that substance, but much of the substance of the church lies where you don't know anything about it! There is a mine near Plymouth where the men who work in it, 250 feet below the surface, have a little shelf for their Bibles and their hymn books—and a little place where every morning, when they go down into the black darkness, they bow before God and praise Him whose tender mercies are over all His works. You never heard of these miners, perhaps, and do not know of them. But perhaps some of them are the very substance of the church! There sits Mr. Somebody in that pew—oh, what a support he is to the church! Yes in money matters, perhaps, but do you know, there is poor old Mrs. Nobody in the aisle that is most likely a greater pillar to the church than he, for she is a holier Christian, one who lives nearer to her God and serves Him better—she is, “the substance thereof.” Ah, that old woman is often in prayer in the attic. That old man on his bed that spends days and nights in supplication—such people as these are the substance of the church! Oh, you may take away your prelates, your orators and the best and greatest of those who stand among earth's mighty men and their place could be replaced! But take away our intercessors—take away the men and women who breathe out prayer by night and day and, like the priests of old, offer the morning and evening lamb as a perpetual sacrifice—and you kill the church at once! What are the ministers? They are but the arms of the church and the lips of it. A man may be both dumb and armless and yet live. But these, the heavenly seed, the chosen men and women who live near their God and serve Him with sacred fervent piety—*these* are the heart of the church! We cannot do without them! If we lose them, we will die. “The holy seed is the substance thereof.”

Then, my hearer, you are a church member. Let me ask you—are you one of the holy seed? Have you been begotten again to a lively hope? Has God made you holy by the sanctifying influence of His Spirit and by the justifying righteousness of Christ and by the application to your conscience of the blood of Jesus? If so, then you are the substance of the church! They may pass by you and not notice you, for you are little, but remember the substance is little. The life-germ within the grain of barley

is too small for us, perhaps, to detect. The life within the egg is almost an animalcule—you can scarcely see it. And so the life of the church is among the little ones where we can scarcely find it out! Rejoice if you are much in prayer—you are the life of the church! But you—oh you proud man—pull down your grand thoughts of yourself! You may give to the church, you may speak for the church and act for the church—but unless you are a holy seed, you are not the substance thereof and it is the substance which is, in reality, of the greatest value!

But here let me say one thing before I leave this point. Some of you will say, “How is it that good men are the means of preserving the visible church?” I answer the holy seed does this because it derives its life from Christ. If the holy seed had to preserve the church by its own purity and its own strength, the church would go to the dogs tomorrow! But it is because these holy ones continually draw fresh life from Christ that they are able to be, as it were, the salvation of the body and, by their influence, direct and indirect, shed life over the whole visible church! The prayers of those living ones in Zion bring down many a blessing upon us! The groans and cries of these earnest intercessors prevail with heaven and bring down very rich supplies of mercy from the gates of paradise! And besides, their holy example tends to check us and preserve us in purity! They walk among us like God’s own favored ones, wrapped in white, reflecting His image wherever they go and tending, under God, to the sanctifying of believers—not through their vaunting any self-righteousness, but by stirring up believers to do more for Christ and to be more like He! “The holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

III. And now I come to the third point. This is true of EVERY INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER—his substance is in him when he has lost his leaves.

The Arminian says that when a Christian loses his leaves, he is dead. “No,” says God’s Word, “he is not.” He may look as if he were dead and not have so much as here and there a leaf upon the topmost branch, but he is not dead. “Their substance is in them even when they lose their leaves.”

By losing their leaves, allow me to understand two things. Christians lose their leaves when they lose their comforts, when they lose the sensible enjoyment of their Master’s presence and when their full assurance is turned into doubt. You have had many such a time as that, have you not? Ah, you were one day in such a state of joy, that you said you could—

***“Sit and sing yourself away
To everlasting bliss.”***

But a wintry state came and your joy all departed. You stood like a bare tree after the wind had swept it in the time of winter, with just perhaps

one dried leaf hanging by a thread on the topmost branch! But you were not dead—no, your substance was in you, when you had lost your leaves. You could not see that substance and good reason why, because your life was hid with Christ in God! You saw not your signs but you still had your substance, though you could not see it. There was no heaving of faith, but faith was there. There was no looking out of hope, but though hope's eyelids were shut, the eyes were there, to be opened afterwards. There was no lifting, perhaps, of the hand of ardent prayer, but the hands and arms were there, though they hung powerless by the side. God said, afterwards, "Strengthen the feeble knees and lift up the hands that hang down." Your substance was in you when you had lost your leaves! Good Baxter says—"We do not see our graces, except when they are in exercise and yet they are as much there when they are not in exercise as when they are." Says he, "Let a man take a walk into a forest; there lies a hare or a rabbit asleep under the leaves—but he cannot see the creature until it is frightened and it runs out. Then he sees it to be there." So if faith is in exercise, you will perceive your evidence—but if faith is slumbering and still, you may be led to doubt its existence—and yet it is there all the while—

***"Mountains when in darkness hidden,
Are as real as in day,"***

said one. And truly the faith of the Christian, when shrouded by doubts and fears, is just as much there as when he rejoices devoutly in the display of it!

It is a common error of young converts that they attempt to live by their experience instead of tracing their life up to its precious source. I have known persons rejoicing in the fullest assurance one day and sinking into the deepest despondency the next. The Lord will sometimes strip you of the leaves of evidence to teach you to live by faith, as John Kent says—

***"If today He deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He tomorrow may distress us
Make us feel the plague within—
All to make us
Sick of self and fond of Him!"***

But ah, there is a worse phase to the subject than this! Some Christians lose their leaves not by doubts but by sin. This is a tender topic—one which needs a tender hand to touch. Oh, there are some in our churches that have lost their leaves by lust and sin! They were once fair professors—they stood green among the church, like the very leaves of paradise! But in an evil hour they fell, the slaves of temptation. They were God's own people by many infallible marks and signs—and if they

were so, though it is grievous that they should have lost their leaves, yet there is the sweet consolation—their substance is still in them—they are still the Lord's! They are still His living children, though they have fallen into the coma of sin and are now in a fainting fit, having gone astray from Him and having their animation suspended, while life is still there. Some, as soon as they see a Christian do anything inconsistent with his profession, say, "That man is no child of God. He cannot be! It is impossible." Yes, but, sir, remember what he taught, who once said—"If a brother errs, you that are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted." It is a fact! Deny it who will and abuse it, if you please, to your own wicked purposes. I cannot help it—it is a fact that some living children of God have been allowed—and an awful allowance it is—to go into the very blackest sins! Do you think David was not a child of God, even when he sinned? It is a hard subject to touch. But it is not to be denied. He had the life of God within him before and though he sinned—oh, horrid and awful was the crime—yet his substance was in him when he lost his leaves! And many a child of God has gone far away from his Master—but his substance is in him. And how do we know this? Because a dead tree never lives again! If the substance is really gone, it never lives. And God's Holy Word assures us that if the real life of grace could die out in anyone, it could never come again. For says the apostle, "It is impossible, if they have been once enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift and have been partakers of the Holy Spirit"—if these fall away—"it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." Their tree is "dead, plucked up by the roots." And the apostle Peter says—"For if, after they have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, they are again turned back, their last end shall be worse than the first." But now take David, or take Peter, whichever you please. Peter we will have. Oh, how foully did he curse his Master! With many an oath he denied Him. But had not Peter the life of God in him, then? Yes. And how do we know? Because when his Master looked upon him, he "went out and wept bitterly." Ah, if he had been a dead man, hardened and without the substance in him, his Master might have looked to all eternity and he would not have wept bitterly!

How do I know that David was yet alive? Why, by this—that although there was a long, long winter and there were many pricks of conscience—like the workings of the sap within a tree, abortive attempts to thrust forward here and there a shoot before its time—yet when the hour was come and Nathan came to him and said, "You are the man," had David been dead, without the life of God, he would have spurned Nathan from him and might have done what Manasseh had done with Isaiah—cut him

in pieces in his anger! But instead of that, he bowed his head and wept before God! And still it is written, "The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die." His substance was in him when he lost his leaves! Oh, have pity upon poor fallen brothers and sisters! Burn them not! They are not dead logs—though their leaves are gone, their substance is in them! God can see grace in their hearts when you cannot see it. He has put a life there that can never expire, for He has said, "I give unto My sheep *eternal* life," and that means a life that lives forever! The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into *everlasting* life. You may choke the well up with big stones but the water will yet find its way out and well up notwithstanding. And so the heir of heaven may to the grief of the church and to the injury of himself most grievously transgress. Weep, my eyes, O weep for any that have done so! O bleed, my heart and you have bled, for any that have so sinned! But yet their "substance is in them, when they cast their leaves"—so "the holy seed"—that is, Christ within them, the Holy Spirit within them, the new creature within them—"the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." Poor backslider! Here is a word of comfort for you! I would not comfort you in your sins. God forbid! But if you know your sins and hate them, let me comfort you. You are not dead! As Jesus said of the damsel, "She is not dead but sleeps," so let me say of you, "You are not dead. You shall yet live." Do you repent? Do you grieve over your sin? That is the bud that shows that there is life within! When a common sinner, sins, he repents not, or if he does repent, it is a legal repentance. His conscience tricks him but he hushes it. He does not leave his sin and turn from it.

But did you ever see a child of God after he had been washed from a foul sin? He is a changed man! I know such an one who used to carry a merry countenance and many were the jokes he made in company. But when I met him after an awful sin, there was a solemnity about his countenance that was unusual to him. He looked, I should say, something like Dante, the poet, of whom the boys said, "There is the man that has been in hell"—because he had written of hell and looked like it—he looked so terrible. And when we spoke of sin, there was such a solemnity about him. And when we spoke of going astray, the tears ran down his cheeks, as much as to say, "I have been astray, too." He seemed like good Christian, after he had been in Giant Despair's castle. Do you not remember, beloved, the guide who took the pilgrims up to the top of a hill called Clear, and he showed them from the top of the hill a lot of men with their eyes put out, groping among the tombs, and Christian asked what it meant? Said the guide, "These are pilgrims that were caught in Giant Despair's castle; the giant had their eyes put out, and they are left to wander among the tombs to die, and their bones are to be left in the

courtyard.” Whereupon John Bunyan very naively says, “I looked and saw their eyes full of water, for they remembered they might have been there, too.” Just like the man talked and spoke that I once knew—he seemed to wonder why God had not left him to be an apostate forever, as the lot of Judas or Demas! He seemed to think it such a startling thing that while many had gone aside altogether from God’s way, he should still have had his substance in him, when he had lost his leaves and that God should still have loved him! Perhaps, beloved, God allows some such men to live and sin and afterwards repent for this reason—you know there are some voices needed in music that are very rare and when, now and then, such a voice is to be heard, everyone will go to hear it. I have thought that perhaps some of these men in heaven will sing soprano notes before the throne—choice, wondrous notes of grace, because they have gone into the depths of sin after profession and yet He loved them when their feet made haste to perdition and fetched them up because He “loved them well.” There are but few such, for most men will go foully into sin. They will go out from us because they are not of us, for if they had been of us they would doubtless have continued with us. But there have been a few such—great saints, then great backsliding sinners—and then, by His grace, great saints again. Their substance was in them when they had lost their leaves. Oh, you that have gone far astray, sit and weep! You cannot weep too much, though you should cry with Herbert—

***“Oh, who will give me tears? Come all you springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes—come, clouds and rain!
My grief has need of all the watery things,
That nature has produced.”***

You might well say—

***“Let every vein
Suck up a river to supply my eyes,
My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out, and with my state agree.”***

But yet remember, “He has not forsaken His people, neither has He cut them off,” for He still says—

***“Return, O wanderer, return,
And seek an injured Father’s heart.”***

Return! Return! Return! Your Father’s heart still longs for you! He speaks through the written oracles at this moment, saying, “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, O Israel? How can I make you as Admah? How can I set you as Zeboim? My heart longs. My repentings are kindled together. For I will heal their backslidings, I will receive them graciously, I will love them freely, for they are Mine still. As the terebinth, and as the oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves,

even so the holy seed within, the elect and called vessels of mercy, is still the substance thereof.”

And now, what have I to say to some of you who live in black sin and yet excuse yourselves on account of the recorded falls of God’s people? Sirs, know this—inasmuch as you do this, you twist the Scriptures to your own destruction! If one man has taken poison and there has been a physician by his side so skillful that he has saved his life by a heavenly antidote, is that any reason why you, who have no physician and no antidote, should yet think that the poison will not kill you? Why man, the sin that does not damn a Christian, because Christ washes him in His blood, will damn you! Said Brookes—and I will repeat his words and have done—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, said the apostle, be his sins ever so many. But he that believes not shall be damned, be his sins ever so few.” Truly your sins may be little but you are lost for them without Christ! Your sins may be great, but if Christ pardons them, then you shall be saved! Then the one question I have to ask of you is—Have you Christ? For it you have not, then you have not the holy seed—you are a dead tree and in due time you shall be tinder for hell! You are a rotten-hearted tree, all touch-wood, ready to be broken in pieces, eaten by the worms of lust! And ah, when the fire shall take hold of you, what a blazing and a burning! Oh, that you had life! Oh, that God would give it to you! Oh, that you would now repent! Oh, that you would cast yourself on Jesus! Oh, that you would turn to Him with full purpose of heart! For then, remember, you would be saved—saved now, and saved forever; for “the holy seed” would be “the substance thereof.”

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CHRIST ABOUT HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS

NO. 122

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 15, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”
Luke 2:49.

BEHOLD then, how great an interest God the Father takes in the work of salvation! It is called, “His business.” And though Jesus Christ came to accomplish our redemption, came to set us a perfect example and to establish a way of salvation, yet He came not upon His own business but upon His Father’s business—His Father taking as much interest in the salvation of men as even He, Himself, did! The great heart of the Father was as full of love as the bleeding heart of the Son and the mind of the first person of the Trinity was as tenderly affected towards His chosen as even the mind of Christ Jesus, our substitute, our surety and our all! It is His “Father’s business.” Behold, also, the condescension of the Son, that He should become the servant of the Father, to do not His own business, but the Father’s business! See how He stoops to become a child, subject to His mother. And mark how He stoops to become a man, subject to God, His Father. He took upon Himself the nature of man and though He was the Son, equal in power with God, who “counted it not robbery to be equal with God,” yet He, “took upon Himself the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Learn, then, O believer, to love all the persons of the divine Trinity alike! Remember that salvation is no more the work of one than of the other. They all three agree in one and as in the creation they all said, “Let *Us* make man,” so in salvation they all say, “Let *Us* save man.” And each of them does so much of it that it is truly the work of each and undividedly the work of all! Remember that notable passage of Isaiah the prophet—“I will divide Him a portion with the great and *He* shall divide the spoil with the strong.” God divides and Christ divides. The triumph is God’s—the Father “divides for Him a portion with the great.” It is equally Christ’s—He “divides the spoil with the strong.” Set not one person before the other. Reverently adore them alike, for they are one—one in design, one in character and one in essence! And while they are truly three, we may in adoration exclaim, “Unto the one God of heaven and earth be glory, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

But now I shall invite your attention, first, to *the spirit of the Savior*, as breathed in these words, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" And then, secondly, I shall exhort the children of God with all the earnestness which I can command, with all the intensity of power which I can summon to the point to *labor after the same spirit*, that they too may say, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

I. First, then, note THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST. It was a spirit of undivided consecration to the will of God, His Father. It was a spirit urged onward by an absolute necessity to serve God. Note the word, "must." "Did you not know that I *must*?" There is a something in Me which prevents Me from doing other work. I feel an all-controlling, overwhelming influence which compels Me at all times and in every place to be about My Father's business—the spirit of high, holy, entire, sincere, determined consecration in heart to God. "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

First, what was the impelling power which (as it were) forced Christ to be about His Father's business? And then, secondly, how did He do His Father's business and what was it?

1. What was the impelling power which made Christ say, "I must be about My Father's business"?

In the first place, it was the spirit of *obedience* which thoroughly possessed itself of His bosom. When He took upon Him the form of a servant, He received the spirit of an obedient servant, too. He became as perfect in the capacity of a servant as He had ever been in that of a ruler, though in that He had perfectly executed all His life. Beloved believer, do you not remember when you were first converted to God, when the young life of your new-born spirit was strong and active, how impetuously you desired to obey God and how intense was your eagerness to serve Him in some way or other? I can well remember how I could scarcely abide myself five minutes without doing something for Christ. If I walked the street, I must have a tract with me; if I went into a railway carriage, I must drop a tract out of the window; if I had a moment's leisure, I must be upon my knees or at my Bible; if I were in company, I must turn the subject of conversation to Christ that I might serve my Master! Alas, I must confess, much of that strength of purpose has departed from me, as I doubt not it has from many of you, who, with a greater prominence, have also received diminished zeal. It may be that in the young dawn of life we did imprudent things in order to serve the cause of Christ. But I say, give me back the time, again, with all its imprudence and with all its hastiness, if I might but have the same love to my Master, the same overwhelming influence in my spirit making me obey because it was a pleasure for me to obey God! Now, Christ felt just the same way! He must do it. He must serve God. He must be obedient. He could not help it. The

Spirit was in Him and would work just as the spirit of disobedience in the wicked impels them to sin. Lust, sometimes, drags the sinner on to sin with a power so strong and mighty that he, poor man, can no more resist it than the dried leaf can resist the tempest! We had lusts so omnipotent that they had but to suggest and we were their willing slaves! We had habits so tyrannical that we could not break their chains. We were impelled to evil, like the straw in the whirlwind, or the chip in the whirlpool. We were hurried wherever our lusts would bear us—"drawn away and enticed." Now, in the new heart it is just the same, only in another direction—the spirit of obedience works in us, impelling us to serve our God so that when that spirit is unclogged and free, we may truly say, "We must be about our Father's business." We cannot help it!

2. But Christ had what few men have. He had another motive for this, another impelling cause. *He had a sacred call to the work which He had undertaken* and that sacred call forced Him on. You think, perhaps, it is fanatical to talk of sacred calls. But call it fanatical or not, this one thing I know—the belief in a special call to do a special work is like the arm of omnipotence to a man! Let a man believe that God has set him to do a particular work and you may sneer at him—what does he care? He would give as much for your sneer as he would for your smile and that is nothing at all—he believes God intends him to do the work! You say no—but he never asked you for your vote upon the question! He has received God's message, as he thinks, and he goes on and you cannot stop him! If he sits still for a little while, a spirit haunts him—he knows not what it is, but he is unhappy unless he engages in a business which he feels is the commission of his life! If he holds his tongue when God has commanded him to speak, the word is like fire in his bones—it burns its way out, until at last he says, with Elihu, "I am filled with matter. I am like a vessel that needs vent." I must speak, or burst—I cannot help it! Depend upon it, the men who have done the greatest work for our holy religion have been the men who had the special call to it. I no more doubt the call of Luther than I doubt the call of the apostles and he did not doubt it either. One of the reasons why Luther did a thing was because other people did not like it. When he was about to smite a blow at the Papacy by marrying a nun, all his friends said it was a fearful thing. Luther consulted them and did the deed, perhaps, all the sooner because they disapproved of it! A strange reason it may seem, that a man should do a thing because he was dissuaded from it, but he felt that it was his work to strike the Papacy right and left and for that he would give up everything, even the friendship of friends! His business, by night and by day, was to pray down the pope, to preach down the pope, to write down the pope and do it he must, though often in the roughest, coarsest manner, with iron gauntlets on his hands! It was his work—do it he must! You might have done what you pleased with Luther, even to the tearing out

his tongue—he would have taken his pen, dipped it in fire and written in burning words, the doom of Papacy! He could not help it, heaven had forced him to the work! He had a special commission given him from on high and no man could stop him any more than he could stop the wind in its careening, or the tide in its motions! Christ had a special work. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, the Lord has anointed Me to preach glad tidings to the poor.” And He felt the effects of this anointing—the power of this impelling! And stop He must not, He could not, He dare not! “I must,” He said, “be about My Father’s business.”

3. But once more, Christ had something which few of us can fully know. He had *a vow upon Him*—the vow to do the work from all eternity! He had become the surety of the covenant! He had sworn that He would execute His Father’s business. He had taken a solemn oath that He would become Man. That He would pay the ransom price of all His beloved ones. That He would come and do His Father’s business, whatever that might be. “Lo, I come,” He said, “In the volume of the book, it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O God.” Therefore, being faithful and true—the covenant, the engagement, the suretyship, the sworn promise and the oath made Him say, “I must be about My Father’s business.” Whenever you make a vow, my dear friends—and do that very seldom—take care that you keep it. Few should be the vows that men make, but they should always be sincerely kept. God asks no vow of us, but when His Spirit moves us to make a vow—and we may do so honestly if we make a vow in His strength—we are bound to keep it. And he that feels that he has made a vow must then feel himself impelled to do the work which he has vowed to do. Let the difficulty be ever so great, if you have vowed to overcome it, do it! Let the mountain be ever so high, if you have made a vow to God that you will attempt it—scale its summit and never give it up! If the vow is a right one, God will help you to accomplish it. O you upon whom are the vows of the Lord, (and some of you have taken solemn vows upon you, by making a profession of religion), I beseech you, by the sacrament in which you dedicated yourself to your Lord and by that other sacrament in which you found communion with Jesus, to fulfill your vows and pay them daily, nightly, hourly, constantly, perpetually! And let these compel you to say, “I must be about my Father’s business.” These, I think, were the impelling motives which forced Christ on in His heavenly labor.

II. Secondly. But now, what was His Father’s business? I think it lay in three things—example, establishment, expiation.

1. One part of His Father’s business was to send into the world a perfect *example for our imitation*. God had written different books of examples in the lives of the saints. One man was noted for one virtue and another for another. At last God determined that He would gather all His works into one volume and give a condensation of all virtues in the per-

son of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now He determined to unite all the parts into one, to string all the pearls on one necklace and to make them all apparent around the neck of one single person. The sculptor finds here a leg from some eminent master and there a hand from another mighty sculptor. Here he finds an eye and there a head full of majesty. He says within himself, "I will compound those glories, I will put them all together. Then it shall be the model man. I will make *the statue par excellence*, which shall stand first in beauty and shall be noted ever afterwards as the model of manhood." So said God, "There is Job—he has patience. There is Moses—he has meekness. There are those mighty ones who all have eminent virtues. I will take these; I will put them into one. And the man, Christ Jesus, shall be the perfect model of future imitation." Now, I say, that all Christ's life He was endeavoring to do His Father's business in this matter. You never find Christ doing a thing which you may not imitate. You would scarcely think it necessary that He should be baptized. But lo, He goes to Jordan's stream and dives beneath the waves that He may be buried in baptism unto death and may rise again—though He needed not to rise—into newness of life! You see Him healing the sick, to teach us benevolence; rebuking hypocrisy to teach us boldness; enduring temptation to teach us hardness, wherewith, as good soldiers of Christ, we ought to war a good warfare! You see Him forgiving His enemies to teach us the grace of meekness and of forbearance. You behold Him giving up his very life to teach us how we should surrender ourselves to God and give up ourselves for the good of others. Put Christ at the wedding—you may imitate Him. Yes, sirs, and you might imitate Him, if you could, in turning water into wine, without a sin! Put Christ at a funeral. You may imitate Him—"Jesus wept." Put Him on the mountaintop. He shall be there alone in prayer and you may imitate Him. Put Him in the crowd. He shall speak so that if you could speak like He, you would speak well. Put Him with enemies. He shall so confound them that He shall be a model for you to copy! Put Him with friends and He shall be a "friend who sticks closer than a brother," worthy of your imitation! Exalt Him, cry hosanna and you shall see Him riding upon a "colt, the foal of an ass," meek and lowly! Despise and spit upon Him, you shall see Him bearing insult and contempt with the same evenness of spirit which characterized Him when He was exalted in the eyes of the world. Everywhere you may imitate Christ! Yes, sirs and you may even imitate Him in that "the Son of Man came eating and drinking" and therein fulfilled what He determined to do—to pull down the vain Phariseeism of man which says that religion stands in meats and drinks, whereas, "Not that which goes into a man defiles a man but that which goes out of a man, that defiles the man." And that is wherein we should take heed to ourselves, lest the inner man be defiled. Never once did He swerve from that

bright true mirror of perfection. He was in everything as an Exemplar, always doing His Father's business!

2. And so in the matter that I have called establishment, that is the *establishment of a new dispensation*, that was His Father's business and therein Christ was always doing it. He went into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Was He doing it, then? Ah, sirs, He was, for it was necessary that He should be "a faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, for in that He, Himself, has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them who are tempted." When He speaks, you can see Him establishing His Word and when He puts the finger of silence to His lips, He is doing it as much, for then was fulfilled the prophecy, "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb." Does He work a miracle? Do the obedient winds hush their tumult at His voice? It is to establish the gospel, by teaching us that He is divine! Does He weep? It is to establish the gospel, by teaching us that He is human! Does He gather the apostles? It is that they may go abroad in every land, preaching the Word of God! Does He sit upon a well? It is that He may teach a woman and that she may teach the whole city of Samaria the way of salvation! He was always engaged in this work of example, and this work of establishment!

3. And ah, beloved, when He came to the climax of His labor, when He came to the greatest toil of all, that which a thousand men could never have done—when He came to do the *great work of expiation*, how thoroughly He did it—

***"View Him prostrate in the garden—
On the ground your Maker lies!
On the bloody tree behold Him—
Hear Him cry before he dies—
'IT IS FINISHED!'"***

And there you have proof that He was about His Father's business! It was His Father's business that made Him sweat great drops of blood. His Father's business plowed His back with many gory furrows. His Father's business pricked His temple with the crown of thorns. His Father's business made Him mocked and spit upon. His Father's business made Him go about bearing His cross. His Father's business made Him despise the shame when, naked, He hung upon the tree. His Father's business made Him yield Himself to death, though He needed not to die if so He had pleased. His Father's business made Him tread the gloomy shades of Gehenna and descend into the abodes of death. His Father's business made Him preach to the spirits in prison. And His Father's business took Him up to heaven where He sits at the right hand of God, still doing His Father's business! His Father's business makes Him plead day and night for Zion. The same business shall make Him come as the Judge of the

quick and the dead, to divide the sheep from the goats. The same business shall make Him gather together in one, all people who dwell on the face of the earth! Oh, glory to You, Jesus! You have done it! You have done Your Father's business well!

III. Thus, I have given you the example. Now, let me exhort you to IMITATE IT.

Tell me, if you can, why the religion of Christ is so very slow in spreading. Mohammed, an imposter, stood up in the streets to preach. He was hooted, stones were thrown at him. Within a month after, he had disciples. A few more years and he had a host behind him. Not a century had rolled away before a thousand scimitars flashed from their scabbards at the bidding of the caliphs! His religion overran nations like wildfire and devoured kingdoms. But why? The followers of the prophet were entirely devoted to his cause. When that Muslim of old spurred his horse into the sea to ride across the straits of Gibraltar, and then reined him up, and said, "I would cross if Allah willed it!" There was something in it that told us why his religion was so strong. Ah, those warriors of that time were ready to die for their religion and, therefore, it spread. Can you tell me why Christianity spread so much in primitive times? It was because holy men "counted not their lives dear unto them," but were willing to "suffer the loss of all things" for Christ's sake. Paul traverses many countries. Peter ranges through many nations. Philip and the other Evangelists go through various countries, testifying to the Word of God. Sirs, I will tell you why our faith in these days spreads so little. Pardon me—it is because the professors of it do not believe it! Do not believe it? Yes! They believe it in the head, but not in the heart. We have not enough of true devotedness to the cause, or else, I am fully persuaded, God would bless Zion with a far greater increase! How few there are who have given themselves fully to their religion! They take their religion, like my friend over there has taken that little farm of his. He has a farm of a thousand acres but he thinks he could increase his means, perhaps, by taking a little farm of a hundred acres or so a little way off. And he gives that to a rent-farmer and does not take much trouble about it, himself. It is not very likely he will have very fine farming, there, because he leaves it to somebody else. Just so with religion! Your great farm is your shop; your great aim is your worldly business. You like to keep religion as a snug investment at very small interest, indeed, which you intend to draw out when you get near death! But you do not want to live on it just now. You have enough profit from your own daily business and you do not need religion for everyday life. Sirs, the reason why your religion does not spread is because it has not got root enough in your hearts! How few there are of us who are ready to devote ourselves wholly, bodily and spiritually to the cause of the gospel of Christ! And if you should attempt to do so, how many opponents you would meet with! Go into the church meeting and

be a little earnest. What will they say? Why, they will treat you just as David's brothers did, when David spoke about fighting Goliath. "Oh," they said, "because of the pride and the naughtiness of your heart, you have come to see the battle. Now, stand aside, do not think you can do anything—away with you!" And if you are in earnest, especially in the ministry, it is just the same. Your brothers and sisters pray every Sabbath—"Lord, send more laborers into the vineyard!" And if God should send them, they wish them safe out of their corner of it, at any rate. They may go anywhere else, but they must not come anywhere near them, for it might affect their congregation; it might stir them up a little! And people might think they did not labor quite earnestly enough! "Stand aside!" they say. But brothers, do not mind about that. If you cannot bear to be huffed and trimmed, there is little good in you! If you cannot bear trimming, depend upon it, you cannot yet be well lit! Dare to go on against all the prudence of men and you will find them pat you on the shoulder, by-and-by, and call you, "dear brother." Every man is helped to get up, when he is as high as he can be—if you are down, "Keep him down," is the cry! But if you are getting up, you will never get help till you have done it, yourself. And then men will give you their help when you do not require it. However, your war-cry must be, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

Again, even the best of your friends, if you are truly zealous of God, will come to you and say—and very kindly, too—"Now, you must take a little more care of your constitution. Now, don't be doing so much. Don't, I beseech you!" Or if you are giving money away—"Now you must be a little more prudent. Take more care of your family. Really, you must not do so." Or if you are earnest in prayer, they will say—"There is no need of such enthusiasm as this—you know you can be religious and not too religious. You can be moderately so." And so you find both friends and enemies striving to hinder your consecration to Christ! Now, I like what old Rowland Hill said, when someone told him that he was "moderately religious." "Well then, you are irreligious, for a man that is moderately honest is a rogue for certain! And so the man that is moderately religious is irreligious." If religion is worth anything, it is worth everything! If it is anything, it is everything! Religion cannot go halves with anything else, it must be all. We must, if we are thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Christ, imitate Christ in this—the giving up of all to God—so that we can sincerely say—

***"And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I could give Him all."***

I shall never forget the circumstance, when after I thought I had made a full consecration to Christ; a slanderous report against my character

came to my ears. I fell on my knees and said, "Master, I will not keep back even my character for You; if I must lose that, too, then let it go! It is the dearest thing I have, but it shall go. If, like my Master, they shall say I have a devil, and am mad, or, like He, I am a drunk and a wine-bibber, it is gone! Just grant me grace to say, 'I have suffered the loss of all things, and I do count them but dross that I may win Christ!'" And you, Christian, will never get on well in serving God till you have given all to Him. That which you keep back will rot! If you reserve the least portion of your time, your property, or your talents and do not give all to Christ, you will find there will be a sore, and gangrene in it! Christ will bless you in all when you give all to Him. But what you keep from Him, He will curse and blight and ruin. He will have all of us, the whole of us, all we possess, or else He will never be satisfied.

And now let me answer one or two objections and I shall still stir you up, who make a profession of religion, to give up all you have to Christ. You say, "*Sir, I cannot do it. I am not in the right profession.*" Well, sir, you spoke truly when you said that, for if there is a profession that will not allow us to give all to Christ, it is not a right profession and we ought not to follow it at all! "But," you say "how can I do it?" Well what are you? I do not care what you are. I assert it is possible for you to do all things in the name of God and so to give Glory to Christ. Do not think you need be a minister to dedicate yourself to Christ! Many a man has disgraced the pulpit and many a man has sanctified an anvil! Many a man has dishonored the cushion upon which he preached and many a man has consecrated the plow with which he has turned the soil! We ought in all our business, as well as in our sacred acts, to do all for Christ! Let me illustrate this. A merchant in America had devoted a large part of his money for the maintenance of the cause of Christ, and one said to him, "What a sacrifice you make every year." Said he, "Not so; I have a clerk—suppose I give that clerk fifty pounds to pay a schoolmaster, and when he goes to the schoolmaster, he should say, 'Here is your salary; what a sacrifice it is to me to give you that!' 'Why,' the schoolmaster would say, 'Sir, it is not yours, it is no sacrifice at all to you.'" So said this good man, "I gave up all when I came to God; I became His steward, and no longer head of the firm. I made God the head of the firm, and I became the steward. And now when I distribute my wealth, I only distribute it as His paymaster—it is no sacrifice at all." If we talk of sacrifices we make a mistake. Ought not that to be the spirit of our religion? It should be made a sacrifice at first and then afterwards there should be a voluntary offering of all! "I keep my shop open," said one, "and earn money for God. I and my family live out of it—God allows us to do it. For as a minister lives by the gospel, He allows me to live by my business and He permits me to provide a competence for old age but that is not my objective." "I sell these goods," said another, but the profit I get, God has. That which I require for my

own food and raiment and for my household, that God gives back to me, for He has said, bread shall be given me and water shall be sure. But the rest is God's, not mine. I do it all for God." Now you do not understand that theory, do you? It is not business. No, sirs, but if your hearts were right, you would understand it, for it is God's gospel—the giving up all to Christ—the giving up of everything to His cause. When we do that, then shall we understand this passage—"Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" For your business, though it is carried on in your name, will, unknown to men, be carried on in God's name, too! Let me beg of you, however, not to tell everybody if you do it. I have known some that hang the gospel in the window, more attractively, sometimes, than ribbons! I hate the cant of a man, who, when you go to buy ribbons or pay a bill, asks you to have a tract, or invites you into the back parlor to pray. You will see at once what he is after. He wants to sanctify his counter, so that as people catch flies with honey, he may catch you with religion! Put your religion where it will come out but do not cant about it. If a stranger should call upon you and in a moment exclaim, "Let us pray," your best policy is to let him have the street to do it in and you should say, "Thank you, I do my praying mostly alone. I see what it is. If I thought you had the spirit of prayer and it had been the proper season, I would have joined with you with all my heart." But the religion of a man who will just step into your house, to let you see what an extraordinary pious man he is, is either very sick, or else it is a galvanized thing that has got no life in it at all! I regard prayer as a very sacred thing. "When you pray, enter into your closet. And when you give alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does." For verily if you do it to be seen of men, you have your reward—and a poor one it is—a little praise for a minute and it is all gone! But nevertheless, do not run into one extreme by running from another. Consecrate your business by your religion. Do not paint your religion on your side-board, but keep it ready whenever you need it and I am sure you will always need it.

Asks one, "How can I do God's business; I have no talent; I have no money? All I earn in the week, I have to spend, and I have scarcely money enough to pay my rent. I have no talent. I could not teach in a Sunday school." Brother, have you a child? Well, *there* is one door of usefulness for you. Sister, you are very poor. No one knows you. You have a husband, and however drunk he may be, *there* is a door of usefulness for you. Bear up under all his insults, be patient under all his taunts and jeers and you can serve God and do God's business. "But sir, I am sick; it is only today I am able to get out at all. I am always on my bed." You can do your Master's business by lying on a bed of suffering for Him, if you do it patiently. The soldier who is ordered to lie in the trenches is just as obedient as the man who is ordered to storm the breach. In everything you do, you can serve your God. Oh, when the heart is rightly

tuned in this matter, we shall never make excuses and say, "I cannot be about my Father's business." We shall always find some business of His to do! In the heroic wars of the Swiss, we read that the mothers would bring cannonballs for the fathers to fire upon the enemy and the children would run about and gather up the shot that sometimes fell, when ammunition ran short, so that all did something. We hate war but we will use the figure in the war of Christ. There is something for you all to do. Oh, let us who love our Master, let us who are bound to serve Him by the ties of gratitude—let us say, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

And now I close up by addressing all the Lord's people here and urging them to serve God with all their hearts, by giving them two or three very brief and very earnest reasons.

Be about your Father's business with all earnestness, because that is the way of *usefulness*. You cannot do your own business and God's, too. You cannot serve God and self any more than you can serve God and mammon. If you make your own business, God's business, you will do your business well and you will be useful in your day and generation. Never shall we see any great revival in the church or any great triumphs of religion until the Christian world is more touched with the spirit of entire consecration to Christ! When the world shall see us in earnest, then God will bring men in—not before! We go to our pulpits in half-heartedness—we go to our place of worship mere shells without the kernel. We give the outward ceremony and take away the heart. We shall never see Christ's cause triumphant so. Would you be useful? Would you extend your Master's empire? Then be about your Father's business!

Again, would you be *happy*? Be about your Father's business. Oh, it is sweet employment to serve your Father! You need not turn aside from the ways of business to do that. If your heart is right, you can serve God in weighing a pound of tea as much as in preaching a sermon! You can serve God as much in driving a horse and cart as in singing a hymn—serve God in standing behind your counter at the right time and the right season, as much as sitting in your pews! And oh, how sweet to think, "I am doing this for God. My shop is opened on God's behalf. I am seeking to win profit for God. I am seeking to get business for God's cause that I may be able to devote more to it and prosper it more by what I am able voluntarily to consecrate to Him." You will have happiness when you rise such, as you never knew before, if you can think, "I am going to serve God today." And when you end at night, instead of saying, "I have lost so much," you will be able to say, "Not I—my God has lost it. But the silver and the gold are His and if He does not care to have either of them—very well. Let them go. He shall have it one way or another. I do not need it. If He chooses to take it from me in bad debts, well and good; let me give to

Him in another way, it will be the same. I will revere Him continually, even in my daily avocations.”

And this dear friends, will be the way—and I trust you can be moved by this—this will be the way to have eternal glory at last, not for the sake of what you do, but as the gracious reward of God for what you have done! “They who turn many to righteousness shall be as the stars forever and ever.” Would you like to go to heaven alone? I do not think you would. My happiest thought is this—that when I die, if it shall be my privilege to enter into rest in the bosom of Christ—I know I shall not enter heaven alone! By His grace there have been thousands whose hearts have been pricked and have been drawn to Christ under the labors of my ministry. Oh, what a pleasant thing to flap one's wings to heaven and have a multitude behind! And when you enter heaven, to say, “Here am I and the children You have given me!” You cannot preach, perhaps, but you can travail in birth with children for God, in a spiritual sense, in another way, for if you help the cause, you shall share the honor, too! You do that, perhaps, which is not known among men, yet you are the instrument and God shall crown your head with glory among those who “are as the stars forever and ever.” I think, dear Christian friends, I need say no more, except to bid you remember that you owe so much to Christ for having saved you from hell. You owe so much to that blood which redeemed you that you are duty bound to say—

**“Here, Lord, I give myself away—
‘Tis all that I can do.”**

Go out now, and if you are tempted by the world, may the Spirit enable you to reply, “I must be about my Father's business.” Go out, and if they call you fanatical, let them laugh at you as much as they like—tell them you must be about your Father's business. Go on, and conquer, and God be with you! And now farewell, with this last word, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believes not, shall be damned.” Faith in Christ is the only way of salvation! You who know your guilt cast yourselves on Christ, and then dedicate yourselves to Him. So shall you have joy here, and glory everlasting in the presence of the blessed, where bliss is without alloy, and joy without end!

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PARTICULAR ELECTION

NO. 123

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 22, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“Therefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall: for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
2 Peter 1:10, 11.

IT is exceedingly desirable that in the hours of worship and in the house of prayer our minds should be as much as possible divested of every worldly thought. Although the business of the week will very naturally struggle with us to encroach upon the Sabbath, it is our business to guard the Sabbath from the intrusion of our worldly cares, as we would guard an oasis from the overwhelming eruption of the sand. I have felt, however, that today we should be surrounded with circumstances of peculiar difficulty in endeavoring to bring our minds to spiritual matters, for of all times, perhaps, election times are the worst. So important in the minds of most men are political matters that very naturally after the hurry of the week, combined with the engrossing pursuit of elections, we are apt to bring the same thoughts and the same feelings into the house of prayer and speculate, perhaps, even in the place of worship, whether a conservative or a liberal shall be returned for our borough, or whether for the City of London there shall be returned Lord John Russell, Baron Rothschild, or Mr. Currie. I thought this morning, “Well, it is of no use my trying to stop this great train in its progress! People are just now going on at an express rate on these matters. I think I will be wise and instead of endeavoring to turn them off the line, I will turn the points so that they may still continue their pursuits with the same swiftness as ever, but in a new direction! It shall be the same line. They shall still be traveling in earnest towards election but, perhaps, I may have some skill to turn the points so that they shall be enabled to consider election in a rather different manner!”

When Mr. Whitefield was once applied to use his influence at a general election, he returned answer to his lordship who requested him that he knew very little about *general* elections but that if his lordship took his advice he would make his own *particular* “calling and election sure,” which was a very proper remark. I would not, however, say to any per-

sons here present, despise the privilege which you have as citizens. Far be it from me to do it! When we become Christians, we do not leave off being Englishmen! When we become professors of religion, we do not cease to have the rights and privileges which citizenship has bestowed on us. Let us, whenever we shall have the opportunity of using the right of voting, use it as in the sight of Almighty God, knowing that for everything, we shall be brought into account and for that among the rest, seeing that we are entrusted with it. And let us remember that we are our own governors, to a great degree, and that if at the next election we should choose wrong governors, we shall have nobody to blame but ourselves, however wrongly they may afterwards act, unless we exercise all prudence and prayer to Almighty God to direct our hearts to a right choice in this matter. May God so help us and may the result be for His glory, however unexpected that result may be to any of us!

Having said so much, let me, then, turn the points and draw you to a consideration of your own particular calling and election, bidding you, in the words of the apostle, “Therefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall: for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” We have here, first of all, *two fundamental points in religion*—“calling and election.” We have here, secondly, *some good advice*—“to make our calling and election sure,” or, rather, to assure ourselves that we are *called and elected*. And then, in the third place, we have *some reasons given us why we should use this diligence to be assured of our election*—because, on the one hand, we shall so be kept from falling and on the other hand, we shall attain unto “an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

I. First of all, then, there are the TWO IMPORTANT MATTERS IN RELIGION—secrets, both of them, to the world—only to be understood by those who have been quickened by divine grace—“CALLING AND ELECTION.”

By the word, “calling,” in Scripture, we understand two things—one, *the general call*, which in the preaching of the gospel is given to every creature under heaven. The second call (that which is here intended) is the *special call*—which we call the effectual call, whereby God secretly, in the use of means, by the Irresistible power of His Holy Spirit, calls out of mankind a certain number whom He has before elected. He calls them from their sins to become righteous, from their death in trespasses and sins to become living spiritual men and from their worldly pursuits to become the lovers of Jesus Christ. The two callings differ very much. As Bunyan very prettily puts it, “By His common call, He gives nothing. By His special call, He always has something to give. He has also a brooding

voice for them who are under His wing and He has an outcry to give the alarm when He sees the enemy come.” What we have to obtain as absolutely necessary to our salvation, is a special calling, made in us—not to our ears but to our hearts—not to our mere fleshly understanding, but to the inner man, by the power of the Spirit. And then the other important thing is election. As without calling there is no salvation, so without election there is no calling! Holy Scripture teaches us that God has from the beginning chosen us who are saved unto holiness through Jesus Christ. We are told that as many as are ordained unto eternal life, believe—and that their believing is the effect of their being ordained to eternal life from before all worlds! However much this may be disputed, as it frequently is, you must first deny the authenticity and full inspiration of the Holy Scriptures before you can legitimately and truly deny it. And since, without doubt, I have many here who are members of the Episcopal church, allow me to say to them what I have often said before, “You, of all men, are the most inconsistent in the world unless you believe the doctrine of election, for if it is not taught in Scripture, there is this one thing for an absolute certainty, it is taught in your Articles.” Nothing can be more forcibly expressed, nothing more definitely laid down than the doctrine of predestination in the Book of Common Prayer. Although we are told what we already know, that that doctrine is a high mystery, and is only to be carefully handled by men who are enlightened.

However, without doubt, it is the doctrine of Scripture that those who are saved are saved because God chose them to be saved, and are called as the effect of that first choice of God! If any of you dispute this, I stand upon the authority of Holy Scripture. Yes, and if it were necessary to appeal to tradition, which I am sure it is not, and no Christian would ever do it, yet I would take you upon that point, for I can trace this doctrine through the lips of a succession of holy men, from this present moment to the days of Calvin; from there to Augustine, and from there on to Paul himself, and even to the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ! The doctrine is without doubt taught in Scripture and were not men too proud to humble themselves to it, it would universally be believed and received as being no other than manifest truth of God! Why, sirs, do you not believe that God loves His children? And do you not know that God is unchangeable? Therefore, if He loves them, now, He must always have loved them! Do you not believe that if men are saved, God saves them? And if so, can you see any difficulty in admitting that because He saves them, there must have been a *purpose* to save them—a purpose which existed before all worlds? Will you not grant me that? If you will not, I must leave you to the Scriptures, themselves. And if *they* will not convince you on the point, then I must leave you unconvinced!

It will be asked, however, why is *calling* here put before *election*, seeing election is eternal and calling takes place in time? I reply, because calling is first to *us*. The first thing which you and I can know is our *calling*—we cannot tell whether we are elect until we feel that we are called! We must, first of all, prove our calling—and then our election is most certainly sure. “Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called—and whom He called, them He also justified—and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” Calling comes first in our apprehension. We are by God’s Spirit called from our evil estate, regenerated and made new creatures—and then, looking backward, we behold ourselves as being most assuredly elect because we were called!

Here, then, I think I have explained the text. There are the two things which you and I are to prove to be sure to ourselves—whether we are *called* and whether we are *elected*. And oh, dear friends, this is a matter about which you and I should be very anxious, for consider what an *honorable* thing it is to be elected! In this world it is thought a mighty thing to be elected to the House of Parliament; but how much more honorable to be elected to eternal life? To be elected to “the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven.” To be elected to be a companion of angels, to be a favorite of the living God, to dwell with the Most High among the fairest of the sons of light, nearest the eternal throne! Election in this world is but a short-lived thing, but God’s election is *eternal*. Let a man be elected to a seat in the House—seven years must be the longest period that he can hold his election. But if you and I are elected according to the divine purpose, we shall hold our seats when the daystar shall have ceased to burn! When the sun shall have grown dim with age and when the eternal hills shall have bowed themselves with weakness—if we are chosen of God and precious, then are we chosen forever—for God changes not in the objects of His election! Those whom He has ordained, He has ordained to eternal life, “and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand.” It is worthwhile to know ourselves elect, for nothing in this world can make a man happier or more valiant than the knowledge of his election. “Nevertheless,” said Christ to His apostles, “rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven”—that being the sweetest comfort, the honeycomb that drops with the most precious drops of all, the *knowledge* of our being chosen by God! And this, too, beloved, makes a man *valiant*. When a man by diligence has attained to the assurance of his election, you cannot make him a coward. You can never make him cry, “Quit,” even in the thickest battle. He holds the standard firmly and cleaves his foes with the sword of the truth of God. “Was I not ordained by God to be the standard-bearer of this truth? I must, I will stand by it, despite you all,” he says to every enemy! “Am I not a chosen king? Can floods of water

wash out the sacred unction from a king's bright brow? No, never! And if God has chosen me to be a king and a priest unto God forever and ever, come what may or come what will—the lion's teeth, the fiery furnace, the spear, the rack, the stake—all these things are less than nothing, seeing I am chosen of God unto salvation!" It has been said that the doctrine of election naturally makes men weak. It is a lie! It may seem so in theory, but in practice it has always been found to be the reverse. The men who have believed in destiny and have held fast and firm by it have always done the most valiant deeds. There is one point in which this is akin even with Mahomet's faith—the deeds that were done by him were chiefly done from a firm confidence that God had ordained him to his work. Never had Cromwell driven his foes before him if it had not been in the stern strength of this omnipotent truth. And there shall scarcely be found a man strong enough to do great and valiant deeds unless, confident in the God of providence, he looks upon the happenings of life as being steered by God! He then gives himself up to God's firm predestination, to be borne along by the current of His will, contrary to all the wills and all the wishes of the world! "Therefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

II. Come, then, here is the second point—GOOD ADVICE. "Make your calling and election sure." Not towards God, for they are sure to Him—make them sure to yourself! Be quite certain of them. Be fully satisfied about them. In many of our dissenting places of worship, very great encouragement is held out to doubting. A person comes before the pastor and says, "Oh, sir, I am so afraid I am not converted. I tremble lest I should not be a child of God. Oh, I fear I am not one of the Lord's elect." The pastor will put out his hands to him and say, "Dear brother, you are all right so long as you can doubt." Now, I hold that is altogether wrong! Scripture never says, "He who *doubts* shall be saved," but, "He who *believes*." It may be true that the man is in a good state. It may be true that he needs a little comfort. But his doubts are not good things, nor ought we to encourage him in his doubts—our business is to encourage him *out* of his doubts and, by the grace of God, to urge him to "give *all* diligence to make his calling and election sure," not to doubt it but to be sure of it! Ah, I have heard some hypocritical doubters say, "Oh, I have had such doubts whether I am the Lord's," and I have thought to myself, "And so have I very great doubts about you." I have heard some say they do tremble so because they are afraid they are not the Lord's people and the lazy fellows sit in their pews on Sunday and just listen to the sermon—they never think of giving diligence! They never do good, perhaps are inconsistent in their lives, and then talk about doubting. It is quite right they should doubt—it is well they should and if they did not doubt, we might begin to doubt for them! Idle men have no right to assurance.

The Scripture says, “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

Full assurance is an excellent attainment. It is profitable for a man to be certain in this life and absolutely sure of his own calling and election. But how can he be sure? Now, many of our more ignorant hearers imagine that the only way they have of being assured of their election is by some revelation, some dream and some mystery! I have enjoyed very hearty laughs at the expense of some people who have trusted in their visions! Really, if you had passed among so many shades of ignorant professing Christians as I have, and had to resolve so many doubts and fears, you would be so infinitely sick of dreams and visions that you would say, as soon as a person began to speak about them, “Now, just hold your tongue!” “Sir,” said a woman, “I saw blue lights in the front parlor when I was in prayer and I thought I saw the Savior in the corner and I said to myself I am safe.” **[Mr. Spurgeon here narrated a remarkable story of a poor woman who was possessed with a singular delusion.]** And yet there are tens of thousands of people in every part of the country and members, too, of Christian bodies, which have no better grounds for their belief that they are called and elected, than some equally ridiculous vision, or the equally absurd hearing of a voice! A young woman came to me some time ago. She wanted to join the church and when I asked her how she knew herself to be converted, she said she was down at the bottom of the garden and she thought she heard a voice and she thought she saw something up in the clouds that said to her such-and-such. “Well,” I said to her, “that thing may have been the means of doing good to you, but if you put any trust in it, it is all over with you.” A dream, yes, and a vision may often bring men to Christ. I have known many who have been brought to Him by them, beyond a doubt, though it has been mysterious to me how it was. But when men bring these forward as a *proof of their conversion*, it is a mistake—you may see 50,000 dreams and 50,000 visions and you may be a fool for all that—and all the bigger sinner for having seen them! There is better evidence to be had than all this—“Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

“How, then,” says one, “am I to make my calling and election sure?” Why, thus—if you would get out of a doubting state—get out of an idle state. If you would get out of a trembling state, get out of an indifferent lukewarm state—for lukewarmness and doubting and laziness and trembling very naturally go hand in hand! If you would enjoy the eminent grace of the full assurance of faith under the blessed Spirit’s influence and assistance, do what the Scripture tells you—“Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” Wherein shall you be diligent? Note how the Scripture has given us a list. Be diligent in your *faith*. Take care that your faith is of the right kind—that it is not a creed but a credence—that

it is not a mere belief of doctrine but a reception of doctrine into your heart and the practical light of the doctrine in your soul! Take care that your faith results from necessity—that you believe in Christ because you have nothing else to believe in. Take care it is simple faith, hanging alone on Christ, without any other dependence but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And when you have given diligence about that, give diligence next to your *courage*. Labor to get *virtue*. Plead with God that He would give you the face of a lion, that you may never be afraid of any enemy—however much he may jeer or threaten you, but that you may, with a consciousness of right, go on, boldly trusting in God and having, by the help of the Holy Spirit, obtained that, study well the Scriptures and get *knowledge*. For knowledge of doctrine will tend very much to confirm your faith. Try to understand God’s Word. Get a sensible, spiritual idea of it. Get, if you can, a system of divinity out of God’s Bible. Put the doctrines together. Get real, theological knowledge, founded upon the infallible word. Get knowledge of that science which is most despised but which is the most necessary of all, the science of Christ and of Him crucified and of the great doctrines of grace. And when you have done this, “Add to your knowledge *temperance*.” Take heed to your body—be temperate there. Take heed to your soul—be temperate there. Be not drunk with pride. Be not lifted up with self-confidence. Be temperate. Be not harsh towards your friends, nor bitter to your enemies. Get temperance of lips, temperance of life, temperance of heart, temperance of thought. Be not passionate—be not carried away by every wind of doctrine. Get temperance and then add to it, by God’s Holy Spirit, *patience*. Ask Him to give you that patience which endures affliction, which, when it is tried, shall come forth as gold. Array yourself with patience that you may not murmur in your sicknesses—that you may not curse God in your losses, nor be depressed in your afflictions. Pray without ceasing, until the Holy Spirit has nerved you with patience to endure unto the end! And when you have that, get *godliness*. Godliness is something more than religion. The most religious men may be the most godless men and sometimes a godly man may seem to be irreligious. Let me just explain that seeming paradox. A real *religious* man is a man who sighs after sacraments, attends churches and chapels and is outwardly good but goes not farther. A godly man is a man who does not look so much to the dress as to the person—he looks not to the outward form, but to the inward and spiritual grace. He is a godly man as well as attentive to religion. Some men, however, are godly and, to a great extent, despise form. They may be godly without some degree of religion. But a man cannot be fully righteous without being godly in the true meaning of each of these words, though not in the general vulgar sense of them. Add to your patience an eye to God. Live in His sight, dwell close to Him! Seek for fellowship with Him

and you have got godliness. And then to that, add *brotherly love*. Be loving towards all the members of Christ's church. Have a love to all the saints of every denomination, and then add to that *charity*, which opens its arms to all men and loves them. And when you have got all these, *then* you will know your calling and election! And just in proportion as you practice these heavenly rules of life, in this heavenly manner, will you come to know that you are called and that you are elect. But by no other means can you attain to a knowledge of that except by the witness of the Spirit, bearing witness with your spirit that you are born of God and then witnessing in your conscience that you are not what you were, but are a new man or woman in Christ Jesus and are, therefore, called and elected.

A man over there says he is elect. He gets drunk. Yes, you are elect by the devil, is! That is about your only election. Another man says, "Blessed be God, I don't care about evidences a bit; I am not as legal as you are!" No, I dare say you are not. But you have no great reason to bless God about it, for, my dear friend, unless you have these evidences of a new birth, take heed to yourself—"God is not mocked—whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." "Well," says another, "but I think that doctrine of election a very licentious doctrine." Think on as long as you please, but please to bear me witness that as I have preached it, today, there is nothing licentious about it! Very likely *you* are licentious and you would make the doctrine licentious, if you believed it. But "to the pure all things are pure." He who receives God's truth in his heart does not often pervert it and turn aside from it unto wicked ways. No man, let me repeat, no man has any right to believe himself elect of God unless he has been renewed by God! No man has any right to believe himself called unless his life is, in the main, consistent with his vocation and he walks worthy of that whereunto he is called! Out with an election that lets you live in sin! Away with it! Away with it! That was never the design of God's Word and it never was the doctrine of Calvinists, either! Though we have been lied against, and our teachings perverted, we have always stood by this—that good works, though they do not procure nor in any degree *merit* salvation, yet they are the necessary *evidences* of salvation; and unless they are in men, the soul is still dead, uncalled and unrenewed. The nearer you live to Christ, the more you imitate Him. The more your life is conformed to Him and the more simply you hang upon Him by faith, the more certain you may be of your election in Christ and of your calling by His Holy Spirit. May the Holy One of Israel give you the sweet assurance of grace by affording you "tokens for good" in the graces which He enables you to manifest!

III. And now I shall close up by giving you THE APOSTLE'S REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE.

I put in one of my own to begin with. It is because, as I have said, *it will make you so happy*. Men who doubt their calling and election cannot be full of joy. The happiest saints are those who know and believe it. You know our friends say this is a howling wilderness and you know my reply to it is that they make all the howling themselves. There would not be much howling if they were to look up a little more and look down a little less, for by faith they would make it blossom like the rose and give to it the excellence and glory of Carmel and Sharon! But why they howl so much is because they do not believe. Our happiness and our faith are, to a great degree, proportionate. They are Siamese twins to the Christian. They must flourish or decay together—

***“When I can say my God is mine,
Then I can all my griefs resign!
Can tread the world beneath my feet,
And all that earth calls good or great.”***

But ah—

***“When gloomy doubts prevail,
I fear to call Him mine,
The streams of comfort seem to fail,
And all my hopes decline.”***

Only faith can make a Christian lead a happy life.

But now for Peter’s reasons: First, because *“if you do these things you shall never fall.”* “Perhaps,” says one, “in attention to election we may forget our daily walk and, like the old philosopher who looked up to the stars, we may walk on and tumble into a ditch!” “No, no,” says Peter, “if you take care of your calling and election, you shall not trip but with your eyes up there, looking for your calling and election, God will take care of your feet and you shall never fall!” Is it not very notable that in many churches and chapels, you do not often hear a sermon about *to-day*? It is always either about old eternity, or else about the millennium. Either about what God did before man was made, or else about what God will do when all are dead and buried. It is a pity they do not tell us something about what we are to do today, now, in our daily walk and conversation! Peter removes this difficulty. He says, “This point is a practical point, for you can only answer your election for yourself by taking care of your practice. And while you are so taking care of your practice and assuring yourself of your election, you are doing the best possible thing to keep you from falling.” And is it not desirable that a true Christian should be kept from falling? Mark the difference between *falling* and *falling away*. The true believer can never fall away and perish, but he may fall and injure himself. He shall not fall and break his neck. But a broken leg is bad enough, without a broken neck. “Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down.” But that is no reason why he should dash himself against a stone! His desire is that day by day he may grow more holy,

that hour by hour he may be more thoroughly renewed until conformed to the image of Christ; he may enter into eternal bliss! If, then, you take care of your calling and election, you are doing the best thing in the world to prevent you from falling, for in so doing you shall never fall.

And now, the other reason, and then I shall have almost concluded: *“For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* An “abundant entrance” has sometimes been illustrated in this way—you see yonder ship? After a long voyage, it has neared the haven but is much injured, the sails are torn to ribbons and it is in such a forlorn condition that it cannot come up to the harbor—a steam tug is pulling it in with the greatest possible difficulty. That is like the righteous being “scarcely saved.” But do you see that other ship? It has made a prosperous voyage and now, laden to the water’s edge, with the sails all up and with the white canvas filled with the wind, it rides into the harbor joyously and nobly. That is an “abundant entrance”! And if you and I are helped by God’s Spirit to add to our faith, virtue and so on, we shall have, at the last, “an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.” There is a man who is a Christian. But, alas, there are many inconsistencies in his life for which he has to mourn. He lies there, dying on his bed. The thought of his past life rushes upon him. He cries, “O Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner,” and the prayer is answered. His faith is in Christ and he shall be saved. But oh, what griefs he has upon his bed—“Oh if I had served my God better! And these children of mine—if I had but trained them up better, ‘in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!’ I am saved,” he says, “but alas, alas! Though it is a great salvation, I cannot enjoy it just yet. I am dying in gloom and clouds and darkness. I trust, I hope I shall be gathered to my fathers but I have no works to follow me—or very few, indeed, for though I am saved, I am but *just* saved—saved ‘so as by fire.’” Here is another one. He, too, is dying. Ask him what his dependence is—he tells you, “I rest in none else but Jesus.” But mark him as he looks back to his past life. “In such a place,” he says, “I preached the gospel and God helped me.” And though with no pride about him—he will not congratulate himself upon what he has done—yet does he lift his hands to heaven and he blesses God that throughout a long life he has been able to keep his garments white. That he has served his Master. And now, like a shock of corn fully ripe, he is about to be gathered into his Master’s garner. Listen to him! It is not the feeble lisp of the trembler, but with, “Victory! Victory! Victory!” for his dying shout; he shuts his eyes and dies like a warrior in his glory. That is the “abundant entrance.” Now, the man who “gives diligence to make his calling and election sure,” shall ensure for himself “an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

What a terrible picture is hinted at in these words of the apostle—“Saved so as by fire!” Let me try and present it to you. The man has come to the edge of Jordan. The time has arrived for him to die. He is a believer—just a believer. But his life has not been what he could wish. Not all that he now desires that it had been. And now stern death is at him and he has to take his first step into the Jordan. Judge of his horror when the flames surround his feet! He treads upon the hot sand of the stream. He takes the next step. His hair is well near on end. Though his eyes are fixed on heaven on the other side of the shore, his face is yet marked with horror. He takes another step and he is all bathing in fire. Another step and he is up to his very loins in flames—“saved, so as by fire.” A strong hand has grasped him that drags him onward through the stream. But how dreadful must be the death, even of the Christian, when he is saved “so as by fire”! There on the river’s brink, astonished, he looks back and sees the liquid flames through which he has been called to walk as a consequence of his indifference in this life. Saved he is—thanks to God! And his heaven shall be great and his crown shall be golden and his harp shall be sweet and his hymns shall be eternal and his bliss unfading—but his dying moment—the last article of death, was blackened by sin. And he was saved “so as by fire!” Mark the other man. He, too, has to die. He has often feared death. He dips the first foot in Jordan. As his body trembles, his pulse waxes faint and even his eyes are well near closed. His lips can scarcely speak, but still he says, “Jesus, You are with me, You are with me, passing through the stream!” He takes another step and the waters now begin to refresh him. He dips his hand and tastes the stream and tells those who are watching him in tears, that to die is blessed. “The stream is sweet,” he says, “it is not bitter—it is blessed to die!” Then he takes another step and when he is well near submerged in the stream and lost to vision, he says—

***“And when you hear my eye strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll —
A mortal paleness on my cheek
But glory in my soul!”***

That is the “abundant entrance” of the man who has manfully served his God—who, by divine grace, has had a path unclouded and serene—who, by diligence, has, “made his calling and election sure” and, therefore, as a reward, not of debt but of grace, has entered heaven with higher honors and with greater ease than others equally saved but not saved in so splendid a manner!

Just one more thought. It is said that the entrance is to be “ministered to us.” That gives me a sweet hint that, I find, is dwelt upon by Doddridge. Christ will open the gates of heaven, but the heavenly train of virtues—the works which follow us—will go up with us and minister an entrance to us. I sometimes think if God should enable me to live and die

for the good of these congregations, so that many of them shall be saved, how sweet it will be to enter heaven and when I shall come there, to have an entrance ministered to me not by Christ, alone, but by some of you for whom I have ministered! One shall meet me at the gate and say, “Minister, you were the cause of my salvation!” And another, and another, and another shall all exclaim the same! When Whitefield entered heaven—that highly honored servant of the Lord—I think I can see the hosts rushing to the gate to meet him! There are thousands there who have been brought to God by him! Oh how they open wide the gates! And how they praise God that he has been the means of bringing them to heaven! And how they do minister unto him an abundant entrance! There will be some of you, perhaps, in heaven, with starless crowns—for you never did good to your fellow creatures; you never were the means of saving souls—you are to have crowns without stars. But “they who turn many to righteousness”—“yours are the stars, forever and ever”; and an entrance shall be abundantly ministered to them. I want to get a heavy crown in heaven—not to wear, but to have all the more costly gift to give to Christ! And you ought to desire the same, that you may have all the more honors and so have the more to cast at His feet, with—“Not unto us, but unto Your name, O Christ, be the glory!” “Therefore, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

And now, to conclude: There are some of you with whom this text has nothing to do. You cannot “make your calling and election sure,” for you have not been called! And you have no right to believe that you are elected if you have never been called. To such of you, let me say, do not ask whether you are elected, first, but ask whether you are called. And go to God’s house and bend your knees in prayer. And may God, in His infinite mercy, call you! And mark this—if any of you can say—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling.”***

If any of you, renouncing your self-righteousness, can now come to Christ and take Him to be your all-in-all—you are called! You are elect! “Make your calling and election sure,” and go on your way rejoicing! May God bless you; and to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be glory forever more! Amen.

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THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER

NO. 124

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 29, 1857,
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”
Psalm 91:5.

IF Moses wrote this psalm, he might represent the fowler as being, in this case, the king of Egypt who sought to slay him, or the Amalekites, who pounced upon Israel in the plain when they little expected it. If David penned it, he might have compared Saul to the fowler, for he says he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. But we believe if the verse is applicable to either of those cases, it was intended by the psalmist not to have a private interpretation but to be applicable to all time! And we believe it is spoken concerning that archenemy of souls, the great deceiver, Satan, of whom we just now sang—

***“Satan, the fowler, who betrays
 Unguarded souls a thousand ways”***

“The prince of the power of this world, the spirit which still works in the children of disobedience,” is like a fowler, always attempting to destroy us. It was once said by a talented writer that the old devil was dead and that there was a new devil, now—by which he meant to say that the devil of old times was a rather different devil from the deceiver of these times. We believe that it is the same evil spirit, but there is a difference in his mode of attack. The devil of 500 years ago was a black and grimy thing, well portrayed in our old pictures of that evil spirit. He was a persecutor who cast men into the furnace and put them to death for serving Christ. The devil of this day is a well-spoken gentleman—he does not persecute—he rather attempts to persuade and to beguile. He is not now the furious Romanist so much as the insinuating unbeliever, attempting to overturn our religion while at the same time he pretends he would make it more rational and more triumphant. He, only, would link worldliness with religion, and so he would really make religion void, under the cover of developing the great power of the gospel and bringing out secrets which our forefathers had never discovered! Satan is always a fowler. Whatever his tactics may be, his objective is still the same—to catch men in his net. Men are here compared to silly, weak birds that have not skill enough to avoid the snare and have not strength enough to escape from it. Satan is the fowler. He has been so and still is so—and if he does not now attack us as the roaring lion, roaring against us in persecution, he attacks us as the adder, creeping silently along the path, endeavoring to

bite our heel with his poisoned fangs and weaken the power of divine grace and ruin the life of godliness within us! Our text is a very comforting one to all believers when they are beset by temptation. “Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”

First, *a few words concerning the snare of the fowler*; secondly, the *deliverance*; and thirdly, the *certainty of it*, dwelling upon that word, “surely,” for it seems to be the diamond wherewith this precious golden promise is embellished! “*Surely* He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”

I. First, then, THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER. It is an illustration too suggestive for me to thoroughly unravel. I must leave it for your meditations at home to enumerate the different ways in which a fowler attempts to take his birds. Then you will have suggested to you the different means which the evil spirit employs for the destruction of souls. Allow me, however, just to begin and pass over two or three points connected with the fowler and with the evil one.

1. First, *the fowler’s snare is intimately connected with secrecy*. “Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird.” Therefore the fowler carefully covers up his trap or if the trap, itself, is uncovered, he does well beguile the bird so that it is utterly ignorant of his intention to take it in the trap—little thinking that the food laid there for its banqueting is really placed there for its enticement and destruction! The fowler, when he goes after his birds, is very careful lest they should discover him. We hear, for instance, that in the taking of wild ducks in Lincolnshire, a man will hold before his mouth a piece of turf, in order that the smell of his breath may not be perceived by the birds who are exceedingly wary. The temptations of the world are of this secret sort to a Christian, though not to the wicked man, for the wicked man sins with his eyes wide open—dashing into the net knowing it is a net laying hold of iniquity with both its hands, even when destruction stares him in the face! He will commit a sin that he knows is condemned even by the law of the land—he will rush into a crime, concerning the guilt of which no doubt can be entertained. Not so the Christian—he is taken by secrecy! “Ah,” says one, “if I thought such-and-such a thing were really wrong. If I were perfectly convicted of its wrongfulness, I would give it up.” It is just there the difficulty lies! So would the bird say—“If I thought that really were a trap, I would not enter it. If I were perfectly persuaded that net would entangle me, I would not fly to such-and-such a spot. I would not approach there at all if I were sure it would be to my destruction.” How many a professor there is who asks the question, “May I go to this place? May I go to that place?” Some of us answer, “No,” and we are called Puritans for it! But let those who have attempted to keep their godliness intact, while they pursue the pleasures of this world, stand up and make the mournful confession that the healthiness of the two things can never exist together! We must either serve God wholly, or serve the evil one wholly. “If God is God, serve

Him. If Baal is God, serve him.” One, or else the other! Many a man has been entrapped into sin by Satan not knowing that it was evil! Someone has hinted to him in business, for instance—“You may very safely do such-and-such a thing—all the shopkeepers in the street have done it. It is not actually dishonest—it improves the article—it really does! And although you can thus sell the article at a higher rate than you ought to sell it, you need not tell the public! And if the article is all the better for it, it is quite fair and safe that you should adulterate it.” And so the good easy man, not opening both his eyes, I think, but shutting one of them a little, lest he should see too well to be able to fill his pockets in the dark, is a little taken aside, but, by-and-by, he is led to discover that the act which he has done is the taking of him in the snare of the fowler—for he has been sinning against his God and his God, therefore, punishes him for it with many stripes and lays His rod upon him!

I do not think that a Christian is so often betrayed into a sin that is palpable and known as he is into a sin that is secret. If the devil comes to my door with his horns visible, I will never let him in! But if he comes with his hat on as a respectable gentleman, he is at once admitted. The metaphor may be very quaint, but it is quite true. Many a man has taken in an evil thing because it has been varnished and glossed over and not apparently an evil—and he has thought in his heart there is not much harm in it. So he has let in the little thing and it has been like the breaking forth of water—the first drop has brought after it a torrent! The beginning has been but the beginning of a fearful end! Take care, Christian, of things that are secret! Take care of the common doings of the world which are well enough for the world, perhaps. We would not deny them their pleasures, for they have no others, but they are not good for you, for you have a finer life—a life of a finer texture and order than can exist in the haunts of ungodly persons! Remember, you are not to be a judge for others. Some men, especially those who are unconverted, can, without being led into sin, indulge in many gaieties and merriments. But the Christian is like the Englishman who cannot hope to survive long where the jungle fever reigns. The native can live there but he cannot. And so you who are twice-born will find your piety ruined by that which to a worldly man, does not lead him into greater evil than that which he would naturally commit. You are to have a stricter rule on yourselves than others and are to be sterner in your piety than the world would have you be, for sin is usually hidden and the snare is not often made apparent. “Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”

2. In the second place, *the snare of the fowler is generally noted for its adaptation.* You do not find a fowler setting the same snare for one bird as for another. He knows his bird and he adapts his bait to it. He would be an unwise fowler who should go to work with the same machinery to catch the lark that flies on high as the duck that swims along the stream. The fowler is wiser than that—he adapts his snare to the condi-

tion of the bird which he desires to take! Satan, the fowler, does just the same. There is one man here. He tempts him to drunkenness. Perhaps that would naturally be his sin if left without grace in his heart, and Satan knowing it to be his weak point, attempts to overcome him by surfeiting gluttony and drunkenness. Another man is utterly impervious to any temptation to that bestial habit but, it may be, he is easily taken in another snare—the snare of lust. Therefore Satan adapts his temptation to the hot blood of the man who naturally would be inclined to live a life of sin. Another one, perhaps, eschews every lascivious and sensual habit—then Satan comes to him and adapts his temptation to the shape of pride! The man is naturally a melancholy man, fond of solitude—Satan gets him, if he can, to wrap himself up in a solitary dignity, to say, “I am holy.” “Lord, I thank you I am not as other men are.” Or if a man is not naturally inclined to a very high degree of pride, Satan takes him with sloth. The man likes an easy life—Satan therefore adapts his bait to him by letting him sit still, fold his arms—and so perish by slothfulness. And mark this—he who sits still in the frost when the snow is on the ground, in the depths of the wild regions of the frozen zone, must as surely perish by his idleness, as if he drove a dagger to his heart! Satan knows that and so adapts his bait accordingly. Oh, how often it happens, beloved, that you and I condemn a thing in another person which we allow in ourselves, perhaps without knowing it! We say of such, “How proud he is!” Well, our pride is not exactly of that shape. We have got another shaped pride but the same article, labeled differently but the same thing! Satan adapts the pride to each particular case. We are rich—he does not, perhaps, tempt us to the pride of riches but he tempts us to the pride of mastership and makes us harsh masters to our servants. Or if he does not tempt us to that pride, he perhaps enchants us with the pride of generosity and we are apt to boast of our kindness and of what we have given away. He will always adapt his trap to his man and his bait to his bird. He will not tempt you all with the same temptations he would tempt me with. Nor me with the temptations with which he would naturally assail another. “The snare of the fowler”; a common enemy we have to deal with. He knows our weak points; he has been dealing with men for these last 6,000 years. He knows all about them! He is possessed of a gigantic intellect. Though he is a fallen spirit, he is easily able to discover where our sore places are and there it is he immediately attacks us! If we are like Achilles and cannot be wounded anywhere but in our heel, then at the heel he will send his dart and nowhere else! He will find out our easily besetting sin and there, if he can, he will attempt to work our ruin and our destruction. Let us bless God that it is written, “Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”

3. In the next place, *the fowler’s snare is frequently connected with pleasure, profit and advantage*. In the bird’s case, it is for the seed scattered on the ground that he flies to the snare. It is some tempting bait

which allures him to his death. And usually Satan, the fowler, uses a temptation wherewith to beguile us. "Oh!" says one, "I cannot give up such-and-such a thing, it is so pleasant. sir, you never knew the charms of such-and-such a pursuit, otherwise you could never advise me to relinquish it." Yes, my friend, but it is just the sweetness of it to you that makes it the more dangerous! Satan never sells his poisons plain, he always gilds them before he vends them. He knows very well that men will buy them and swallow them if he does but gild them beforehand. Take care of pleasures—mind what you are doing when you are doing them—many of them are innocent and healthful—but many of them are destructive! It is said that where the most beautiful cacti grow, there the most venomous serpents are to be found at the root of every plant. And it is so with sin. Your fairest pleasures will harbor your grossest sins. Take care! Take care of your pleasures. Cleopatra's asp was introduced in a basket of flowers; so are sins often brought to us in the flowers of our pleasures. Satan offers to the drunk the sweetness of the intoxicating cup which rejoices him when his brain is rioting in frolic and when his soul is lifted up within him. He offers to the lustful man, the scenes and pleasures of carnal mirth and merriment and delight and so he leads him astray with the bait, concealing the hook which afterwards shall pain him. He gives to you and to me, each of us, the offer of our peculiar joy. He tickles us with pleasures, that he may lay hold upon us and so have us in his power! I would have every Christian be especially on his guard against the very thing that is most pleasing to his human nature. I would not have him avoid everything that pleases him, but I would have him be on his guard against it. Just like Job, when his sons had been feasting in their houses; he did not forbid them doing it, but he said, "I will offer a sacrifice, lest my sons should have sinned in their hearts and should have cursed God foolishly." He was more careful over them at the time of their feasting than at any other season! Let us do the same. Let us remember that the snare of the fowler is generally connected with some pretended pleasure or profit, but that Satan's end is not our pleasing but our destruction!

4. In the next place, *sometimes the fowler very wisely employs the force of example.* We all know the influence of the duck decoy in endeavoring to bring others into the snare. How very often Satan, the fowler, employs a decoy to lead God's people into sin! You get with a man—you think him to be a true Christian. You have some respect for his character; he is a high professor—can talk religion by the yard, and can give you any quantity of theology you like to ask for! You watch him commit a sin—ten to one you will do the same if you have much respect for him—and so he will lead you on. And mark—Satan is very careful in the men whom he chooses to be decoys. He never employs a wicked man to be a decoy for a good man. It is very seldom, when Satan would decoy a Christian into a snare, that he makes use of an open reprobate. No, he

makes use of the man who is supposedly religious and who looks to be of the same quality as you! And therefore Satan entices you astray. Let a bad man meet me in the street and ask me to commit sin? The devil knows better than to set him at any such work as that, because he knows I would pass by immediately! If he wants his errand well done, he sends one to me whom I call, brother, and so through the brotherhood of profession I am apt to give him credence and pay him respect. And then if he goes astray, the force of example is very powerful and so I may easily be led into the net, too. Take care of your best friends! Be careful of your companions; choose the best you can, then follow them no farther than they follow Christ! Let your course be entirely independent of everyone else. Say with Joshua, let others do what they will, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

5. Note, once more, that sometimes *the fowler, when he fails to take his bird by deceit and craft, will go a-hawking after it*—will send his hawk into the air to bring down his prey! It often happens, when the devil cannot ruin a man by getting him to commit a sin, he attempts to slander him. He sends a hawk after him and tries to bring him down by slandering his good name! I will give you a piece of advice. I know a good minister, now in venerable old age, who was once most villainously lied against and slandered by a man who hated him only for the truth's sake. The good man was grieved—he threatened the slanderer with a lawsuit, unless he apologized. He did apologize. The slander was printed in the papers in a public apology, and you know what was the consequence? The slander was more believed than if he had said nothing about it! And I have learned this lesson—to do with the slanderous hawk what the little birds do—just fly up! The hawk cannot do them any hurt while they keep above him—it is only when they come down that he can injure them. It is only when by mounting above the birds that the hawk comes sweeping down upon them and destroys them! If any slander you, do not go down to them. Let them slander on. Say, as David said concerning Shimei, "If the Lord has given him commandment to curse, let him curse," and if the sons of Zeruiah say, "Let us go and take this dead dog's head," you say, "No, let him curse!" And in that way you will live down slander. If some of us turned aside to notice every bit of a sparrow that began chirping at us, we would have nothing to do but to answer them. If I were to fight people on every doctrine I preach, I should do nothing else but just amuse the devil and indulge the combative principles of certain religionists who like nothing better than quarrelling! By the grace of God, say what you please against me—I will never answer you but go straight on. All shall end well, if the character is but kept clean. The more dirt that is thrown on it by slander, the more it shall glisten and the more brightly it shall shine. Have you ever felt your fingers itch, sometimes, to be at a man who slanders you? I have. I have sometimes thought, "I cannot hold my tongue any longer, I must answer that fellow." But I have asked of

God for grace to imitate Jesus who, “when He was reviled, reviled not again.” And by His strength let them go straight on! The surest way in the world to get rid of a slander is just to let it alone and say nothing about it, for if you prosecute the rascal who utters it, or if you threaten him with an action and he has to apologize, you will be no better off—some fools will still believe it! Let it alone—let it keep as it is. And so God will help you to fulfill, by your wisdom, His own promise, “Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”

And now, before I close this point, let me observe once more—the fowler, when he is determined to take his birds, uses all these arts at once perhaps, and *besets the bird on every side*. So you will remember, beloved, it is with you. Satan will not leave a stone unturned to ruin your soul forever—

**“Amidst a thousand snares I stand
Upheld and guarded by Your hand.”**

Old Master Quarles says—

**“The close pursuer’s busy hands do plant
Snares in your substance; snares attend your needs,
Snares in your credit; snares in your disgrace;
Snares in your high estate; snares in your base;
Snares tuck your bed, and snares surround your board;
Snares watch your thoughts, and snares attach your word;
Snares in your quiet; snares in your commotion;
Snares in your diet; snares in your devotion!
Snares lurk in your resolves; snares in your doubt;
Snares lie within your heart, and snares without;
Snares are above your head, and snares beneath;
Snares in your sickness, snares are in your death.”**

There is not a place beneath which a believer walks that is free from snares! Behind every tree there is the archer with his barbed arrow. Behind every bush there is the lion seeking to devour. Under every piece of grass there lies the adder. They are everywhere! Let us be careful. Let us gird ourselves with the might of God’s omnipotence and then shall His Holy Spirit keep us so that we shall tread on the lion and adder—the young lion and the dragon shall we trample under our feet and we shall be “delivered from the snare of the fowler.”

II. Now we pass on to the second point—THE DELIVERANCE. God delivers His people from the snare of the fowler. Two thoughts here: *from—out of*. First, he delivers them *from* the snare—does not let them get in it. Secondly, when they do get in it, He delivers them *out of it*. The first promise is the most precious to some of us; the second is the best to others.

He shall deliver you from the snare. How does He do that?

Very often by *trouble*: Trouble is often the means whereby God delivers us from snares. You have all heard of the old story of the celebrated painter who was painting in St. Paul’s. Looking at his work, one day, he went gradually back, inch by inch, to get a view of it so that he might see

the excellence of its proportions—until his feet were just on the edge of the platform upon which he stood. He would have fallen down and been dashed in pieces upon the pavement beneath but just at that moment a workman who stood there, desirous to save his life and not knowing how to do it, hit upon an expedient, which proved to be a very wise one. Instead of shouting out to his master, “Sir, you are in danger,” which would most certainly have sent him backward, he took up a brush and dipping it in a pot of paint, dashed it at the picture. The good man rushed forward in anger to chastise him—but when it was explained, he clearly saw that his servant had acted wisely. Just so with God: You and I have often painted a fine picture and we have been walking backwards admiring it. God knows that our backsliding will soon end in our destruction. And He, by a sad providence, blasts our prospect, takes away our child from us, buries our wife, removes some darling object of our pleasures and we rush forward and say, “Lord, why this?”—utterly unconscious that if it had not been for trouble, we might have been dashed in pieces and our lives would have been ended in destruction! I doubt not that many of you have been saved from ruin by your sorrows, your griefs, your troubles, your woes, your losses and your crosses. All these have been the breaking of the net that set you free from the snare of the fowler!

At other times God keeps His people from the sin of the fowler by *giving them great spiritual strength, a spirit of great courage*—so that when they are tempted to do evil, they say, with decision, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Oh, that was a noble escape of Joseph when his mistress laid hold of his garment! That was a noble escape of his when his soul escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler. And I doubt not there are many here who have done deeds almost as noble as that of Joseph! They have had divine grace within their hearts so that they have turned away their eyes from beholding folly—and when they have been tempted to evil, they have put their foot upon it and said—“I cannot, I cannot, I am a child of God. I cannot and I must not.” And though the thing was pleasing to them, yet have they rejected it. You remember the case of Mr. Stand-Fast in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*? Madame Bubble had greatly enticed poor Mr. Stand-Fast with her offers. He says, “There was one in very pleasant attire, but old, who presented herself to me and offered me three things, to wit, her body, her purse, and her bed. Now the truth is, I was both weary and sleepy—I am also as poor as an owlet, and that perhaps, the witch knew. Well, I repulsed her once and again, but she ignored my repulses and smiled. Then I began to be angry, but she thought nothing of that. Then she made offers again, and said if I would be ruled by her, she would make me great and happy; for, she said, I am the mistress of the world, and men are made happy by me. Then I asked her name and she told me it was Madame Bubble. This set me further from her, but she still followed

me with enticements. Then I betook me, as you saw, to my knees, and with hands lifted up and cries, I prayed to Him that had said He would help. And just as you came up the gentlewoman went her way. Then I continued to give thanks for this, my great deliverance, for I verily believe she intended no good but rather sought to make an end of me in my journey." That is how God delivers His people from the snare of the fowler—by giving them the spirit of prayer as well as the spirit of courage—so that they call upon God in the day of trouble and He delivers them!

And I have noticed one more very singular thing. Sometimes I, myself, have been saved from the snare of the fowler (I cannot tell how, exactly), in this way. I have felt that if the temptation had come a week before, my mind was in that peculiar condition that I would have almost inevitably been led away by it! But when it came, my mind, by passing through some process, had become in such a condition that the temptation was no temptation at all! We were just brought to such a state that what might have before ruined us, we would not then look at. "No," we have said, "if you had offered me this some time ago it might have been accepted. But now God has, by some mysterious influence of His Spirit, turned my heart in another direction and it is not even a temptation to me at all—not worthy of a moment's thought!" So God delivers His people from the snare of the fowler.

But the second thought was that *God delivers His people, even when they get into the snare*. Alas, my hearer, you and I know something about the net! We have been inside it! We have not only seen it spread, we have been in its folds! We know something about the cage, for we have, unfortunately, been in the cage ourselves, even since we have known the Lord. The fowler's hand has been upon our neck—it has only been the sovereign grace of God that has prevented him from utterly destroying us. What a blessed thing it is, that if the believer shall, in an evil hour, go into the net, yet God will bring him out of it! Poor Christian and Hopeful got into the fowler's net when they entered into the castle of Giant Despair. But the key of promise picked the lock and they escaped. They were in the fowler's net, too, when Flatterer cast a net over them and left them in the lane. But there came one who, after he had beaten them full sore, took the net off and they went on their way, better men than they were before they were in the net! I know one who is in the net now. Some bird, one of God's own ones, too, has been taken in the snare. He is now groaning and crying out because, alas, alas, he has sinned! I have a person here, a good man, a professor of religion and a truly worthy one! But alas, he has sinned and at this hour the tears are in his eyes and he is saying—

***"The tumult of my thoughts
Does but increase my woe!
My spirit languishes, my heart***

***Is desolate and low!
Turn, turn You to my soul—
Bring Your salvation near!
When will Your hand release my feet
Out of the deadly snare?”***

O backslider, be cast down, but do not despair! God will restore you yet. Though you have been a wanderer, hear what He says! “Return, O backsliding children, I will have mercy upon you.” But you say you cannot return. Then here is still another promise—“Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.” You shall yet be brought out from all the evil into which you have fallen and though you shall never cease to repent your ways even to your dying day, yet He that has loved you will not cast you away! He will receive you! He will admit you into His dwelling place and will even now restore you to the number of His people and give you joy and gladness—that the bones which He has broken may rejoice. “Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”

There have been very remarkable instances of God delivering His people out of the snare of the fowler, as the following illustration will show—

“A young lady, who belonged to a church in the city of New York, married a young man who was not a Christian. He was a merchant, engaged in a lucrative business and the golden stream of wealth flowed in upon him till he had amassed a large fortune. He accordingly retired from business and went into the country. He purchased a splendid residence. Fine trees waved their luxuriant foliage around it. Here was a lake filled with fish, and there a garden full of rare shrubbery and flowers. Their house was fashionably and expensively furnished. And they seemed to possess all of earth that mortal could desire. Thus prospered and plied with an interchange of civilities among her gay and fashionable neighbors, the piety of the lady declined and her heart became wedded to the world. And it is not to be wondered at that her three children, as they grew up, imbibed her spirit and copied her example. ‘A severe disease,’ it is said, ‘demands a severe remedy.’ And that God soon applied. One morning intelligence came that her little son had fallen into the lake and was drowned. The mother’s heart was pierced with affliction and she wept and murmured against the providence of God. Soon afterwards, her only daughter, a blooming girl of sixteen, was taken sick of a fever and died. It seemed then as if the mother’s heart would have broken; but this new stroke of the rod of a chastening Father seemed but to increase her displeasure against His will! The only remaining child, her eldest son, who had come home from college to attend his sister’s funeral, went out into the fields, soon afterwards, for the purpose of hunting. In getting over a fence, he put his gun over first to assist himself in springing to the ground, when it accidentally discharged itself and killed him! What, then, were that mother’s feelings? In the extravagance of her grief, she fell down, tore her hair, and raved like a maniac against the providence of

God. The father, whose grief was already almost insupportable, when he looked upon the shocking spectacle, and heard her frenzied ravings, could endure his misery no longer. The iron entered into his soul, and he fell dead, victim to his accumulated afflictions! From the wife and mother, her husband and all her children were now taken away. Reason returned, and she was led to reflection. She saw her dreadful backslidings, her pride, her rebellion, and she wept with the tears of a deep repentance. Peace was restored to her soul. Then would she lift up her hands to heaven, exclaiming, 'I thank you, O Father!—the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.' Thus did her afflictions yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, for her heavenly Father had chastened her, "not for His pleasure, but for her profit, that she might become partaker of His holiness."

So God delivered her soul out of the snare of the fowler. She started afresh in the ways of righteousness, serving God with diligence and zeal, and growing up in His fear. By trouble and trial, by some means or another, God will surely deliver His people out of the snare of the fowler, even when they are in it!

III. And now, to conclude, I am to dwell for a moment or two upon that word, "SURELY." The assurance of every truth of Scripture is the beauty of it. If it were not sure, it were not precious. And it is precious because it is sure.

Now, it says, "Surely He shall deliver you." Why? First because He has promised to do it and God's promises are bonds that were never yet dishonored! If He has said He will, He will. Secondly, because Christ Jesus has taken an oath that He will do it. In ages long gone, Christ Jesus became the shepherd of the sheep and the surety of them, too. "If any of them perish," He said, "at My hand you shall require it," and, therefore, because Christ is responsible, because He is the heavenly sponsor for all God's people, they must be kept—for otherwise Christ's bond were forfeited and His oath were null and void. They must be kept, again, because otherwise the union that there is between all of them and Christ would not be a real one! Christ and His Church are one—one body; but if any of the members of My body were cut off, I should be maimed—and if Christ could lose one of His children, He would be a maimed Christ. "We are His body, the fullness of Him that fills all-in-all." If then, the whole Church were not gathered in, Christ would be an incomplete Christ, seeing He would lack His fullness. They must all be saved, for God has determined that they shall be, and the Son has sworn they shall be, and God the Holy Spirit vouches they shall be! None of God's people shall be cast away, or else the Bible is not true. The whole stability of the everlasting covenant rests on their final perseverance! The whole covenant of grace rests on this—

"He shall present our souls

***Unblemished and complete
Before the glory of His face
With joys divinely great.”***

And therefore they must be preserved out of the snare of the fowler because otherwise the covenant would be null and void. If one should perish, the oath would be broken; if one should be cast away, the covenant would be void; and therefore they must be kept secure—

***“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep!
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep!”***

I have no time to enlarge upon that subject, which is big with glory and might afford a topic for many discourses. I now close up by saying, brothers and sisters—is this promise yours? “Surely He shall deliver you.” Are you the person? “How can I tell?” you ask. Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you, as a guilty sinner, cast yourself wholly on the blood and righteousness of the immaculate Redeemer? I do not ask you whether you are a Wesleyan, a Churchman, a Baptist, an Independent, or a Presbyterian—my only question is, Are you born-again? Have you passed from death unto life? Are you “a new creature in Christ Jesus”? Is all your trust put in the Lord Jesus Christ? Has His life become your model and does His Spirit dwell in your mortal body? If so, peace be unto you! This promise is yours! You may have been the worst of men, but if you have faith in Christ, those sins are all forgiven, and you may take this promise to be yours forever! But if you are self-righteous, self-sufficient, ungodly, careless, worldly—there is no such promise for you—you are in the snare; you shall be there, and you shall perish unless you repent, for it is written, “Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” May God save you from perishing by giving you an interest in the blood of Christ! And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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NO. 125

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 18, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

*“And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying: Son of man,
What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch
which is among the trees of the forest?”
Ezekiel 15:1, 2.*

THE Jewish nation had arrogant ideas of themselves; when they sinned against God, they supposed that on account of the superior sanctity of their forefathers, or by reason of some special sanctity in themselves, they would be delivered—sin as they pleased! In consequence of the Infinite Mercy of Jehovah, which He had displayed towards them in delivering them out of so many distresses, they gradually came to imagine that they were the favorite children of providence and that God could by no means ever cast them away! God, therefore, in order to humble their pride, tells them that they, in themselves, were nothing more than any other nation. He asks them what there was about them to recommend them—“I have often called you a vine. I have planted you and nurtured you in a very fruitful hill, but now you bring forth no fruit. What is there in you why I should continue you in My favor? If you imagine there is anything about you more than about any other nation, you are mightily mistaken.” “What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?”

Let us remember that these things might be said without implying that God in the least degree alters His eternal purpose towards any chosen vessel of mercy. The Israelite nation was not chosen to eternal salvation as a *nation*, but chosen to special privileges; a type and shadow of that eternal personal election which Christ has given to His Church. From His own elect Church, God will never withdraw His love. But from the outward and visible church, He sometimes may. From His own people, He will never take away His affection—but from professors, from those who merely stand in His people’s external condition, and are not His children—He may. Yes, and He will withdraw every token of His favor. God humbles Israel by reminding them that they had nothing which other nations had not—that in fact they were a contemptible nation, not worthy to be set side by side with the cedar of Lebanon, or with the oak of Samaria. They were of no use—they were “worthless, unless they

brought forth fruit to Him.” He checks their pride and humbles them with the parable we have here before us.

Beloved, we shall, by God’s help, use this parable for ourselves and learn two lessons from it. The first shall be *a lesson of humility for saints*. And the second, *a lesson of searching for all who are professors*.

I. First, here is A LESSON OF HUMILITY for all you who have “tasted that the Lord is gracious.” “What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?”

In looking upon all the various trees, we observe that the vine is distinguished among them—so that in the old parable of Jotham, the trees waited upon the vine tree and said unto it, “Come and reign over us.” But merely looking at the vine, without regard to its fruitfulness, we would not see any kingship in it over other trees. In size, form, beauty, or utility, it has not the slightest advantage. We can do nothing with the wood of the vine. “Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men make a pin of it to hang a vessel thereon?” It is a useless plant apart from its fruitfulness. We sometimes see it in beauty, trained up by the side of our walls and in the east it might be seen in all its luxuriance as great care is bestowed in its training. But leave the vine to itself and consider it apart from its fruitfulness—it is the most insignificant and despicable of all things that bear the name of trees! Now, beloved, this is for the humbling of God’s people. They are called God’s vine. But what are they by nature more than others? Others are as good as they. Yes, others are even greater and better than they. They, by God’s goodness, have become fruitful, having been planted in a good soil. The Lord has trained them upon the walls of the sanctuary and they bring forth fruit to His glory. But what are they without their God? What are they without the continual influence of the Spirit begetting fruitfulness in them? Are they not the least among the sons of men and the most to be despised of those that have been brought forth of women? Look upon this, believer—

**“What was there in you to merit esteem,
Or give the creator delight?”**

Yes, look upon yourself as you are now. Does not your conscience reproach you? Do not your thousand wanderings stand before you and tell you that you are unworthy to be called His son? Does not the weakness of your mental power, the frailty of your moral power, your continual unbelief and your perpetual backsliding from God tell you that you are less than the least of all saints? And if He has made you anything, are you not thereby taught that it is grace, free sovereign grace, which has made you to differ? Should any here, supposing themselves to be the children of God, imagine that there is some reason in them why they should have been chosen, let them know that as yet they are in the dark concerning the first principles of grace and have not yet learned the gospel! If ever they had known the gospel they would, on the other hand confess that

they were less than the least—the offscouring of all things—unworthy, ill-deserving, undeserving and hell-deserving! They would ascribe it all to distinguishing grace which has made them to differ and to discriminating love which has chosen them out from the rest of the world!

Great Christian, you would have been a great sinner if God had not made you to differ! Oh, you who are valiant for the truth of God—you would have been as valiant for the devil if grace had not laid hold upon you! A seat in heaven shall one day be yours but a chain in hell would have been yours if grace had not changed you. You can now sing His love, but a licentious song might have been on your lips if grace had not washed you in the blood of Jesus! You are now sanctified. You are quickened. You are justified. But what would you have been tonight if it had not been for the interposition of the divine hand? There is not a crime you might not have committed! There is not a folly into which you might not have run! Even murder, itself, you might have committed if grace had not kept you. You shall be like the angels. But you would have been like the devil if you had not been changed by divine grace. Therefore, never be proud. All your garments you have from above—rags were your only heritage. Be not proud though you have a large estate, a wide domain of grace. You had not, once, a single thing to call your own except your sin and misery! You are now wrapped in the golden righteousness of the Savior and accepted in the garments of the beloved, but you would have been buried under the black mountain of sin and clothed with the filthy rags of unrighteousness if He had not changed you! And are you proud? Do you exalt yourself? Oh, strange mystery, that you, who have borrowed everything, should exalt yourself! That you, who have nothing of your own, but still have to draw upon grace should be proud? A poor dependent pensioner upon the bounty of your Savior and yet proud? One who has a life which can only live by fresh streams of life from Jesus and yet proud! Go hang your pride upon the gallows, as high as Haman—hang it there to rot and stand beneath it and denounce it to all eternity, for surely of all things most to be cursed and despised, is the pride of a Christian! He of all men has ten thousand times more reason than any other to be humble and walk lowly with his God and kindly and humbly towards his fellow creatures. Let this, then, humble you, Christian, that the vine tree is nothing more than any other tree, save only for the fruitfulness which God has given it!

II. But now here comes A LESSON OF SEARCH. As the vine without its fruit is useless and worthless—so, too, the professor, without fruit, is useless and worthless. Yes, he is the most useless thing in the whole wide world!

Now, let us dwell upon this point—a *fruitless profession*. And while I am preaching on it, let the words go round to each one and let the minis-

ter and let his deacons and let his hearers all try their hearts and search their reins and see whether they have a fruitless profession!

1. First, a fruitless professor. *How do we know him? What is his character?* Secondly, *What is the reason he is fruitless?* Thirdly, *What is the estimation God holds him in?* He is good for nothing at all! And then, fourthly, *What will be his end?* He is to be burned with fire!

First, *Where are we to find fruitless professors?* Everywhere, dear friends, everywhere—down here, up there, everywhere! In pulpits, and in pews! False professors are to be found in every church. Let us leave other denominations alone, then. They are to be found in *this* church. They are to be found in this present assembly. To whatever denomination you may belong, there are some false and fruitless professors in it. How do you know that you may not belong to those who bring forth no fruit? There are fruitless professors to be found in every position of the church and in every part of society. You may find the false professor among the rich. He has much wealth and he is hailed with gladness by the church. God has given him much of this world's goods, and therefore the church, forgetful that God has chosen the poor, gives him honor, and what does she get from him? She gets but little help—her poor are still neglected and her means not in the least recruited by his riches! Or if she gains a portion of his riches, yet she gets none of his prayers. Nor is she in the least supported by his holy living. He that has riches often lives in sin and rolls in uncleanness. He wears his profession as a uniform, wherewith to cover his guilt! Rich men have sometimes been false professors and they are to be found among poor men, too. Full many a poor man has entered into the church and been cordially received. He has been poor and they have thought it a good thing that poverty and grace should go together—that grace should cheer his hovel and make his poverty-stricken home a glad one. But then, this poor man has turned aside to follies and has degraded himself with drunkenness, has sworn and by unworthy conduct dishonored his God. Or, if not, he has been idle and sat still and been of little service to the church. And so he has been false and fruitless in his profession!

False professors are to be found in the men that lead the vanguard of God's army. The men who preach eloquently, whose opinion is law, who speak like prophets and whose language seems to be inspired! They have brought forth the fruit of popularity—yes, and the fruit of philanthropy, too—but their heart has not been right with God, and therefore the fruit, good in itself, was not fruit unto holiness! The moral benefit of their labors does not extend to everlasting life. They have not brought forth the fruits of the Spirit, seeing that they were not living branches of the living vine. Then there have been false professors in obscurity—modest people who have said nothing and seldom been heard of. They have glided into their pews on the Sunday morning, taken their seats, gone out and satis-

fied themselves that by their presence they had fulfilled a religious duty! They have been silent, quiet, and retired; lazy fellows, doing nothing. You may think that all the fruitless trees grow in the hedge outside of the garden. No, they don't. There are some fruitless trees in the inside of it, in the very center of it! There are some false professors to be found in obscurity as well as in publicity. Some among the poor as well as among the rich!

And there are false professors to be found among men that doubt a great deal. They are always afraid they do not love Jesus, and always saying, "Ah, if I did but know I were His—

***"Tis a point I long to know
Oft it causes anxious thought."***

Yes, and it ought to cause them anxious thought, too, if they are bringing forth no fruit and giving no "diligence to make their calling and election sure." Fruitless professors are to be found, on the other hand among the confident men, who say, without a blush, "I know whom I have believed. I know I am a Christian, let who will, doubt. I am sure and certain my sins cannot destroy me and my righteousness cannot save me. I may do what I like; I know I am one of the Lord's." Ah, fruitless professor again—just as fruitless as the other man—who had all doubts and no faith and did nothing for his Master! And then there is the fruitless professor, who, when he is asked to pray at the prayer meeting, never does so. And who neglects family prayer. We will not say anything about private devotion—no doubt he neglects that, too—he is a fruitless one. Ah, but there may be another who stands up and prays such an eloquent prayer for a quarter of an hour, perhaps, just as fruitless a professor as the silent one! He has plenty of words but no realities—many leaves but no fruits—great gifts of utterance but no gifts of consistency. He is able to *talk* well but not to *walk* well—to *speak* piously but *not* to walk humbly with his God and serve Him with gladness. I do not know your individual characters tonight. But I know enough of you to say that your position, however honorable in the church, and your character, however fair before men, is not enough to warrant any of you in concluding at once that you are not a fruitless professor! For fruitless professors are of every character and every rank—from the highest to the lowest—from the most talented to the most illiterate, from the richest to the poorest, from the most retiring to the most conspicuous! There are fruitless professors in every part of the church.

Now, shall I tell you who is a fruitless professor? The man who neglects private prayer, and does not walk with his God in public; that man whose carriage and conversation before God are hypocritical—who cheats in trade, and robs in business, yet wraps it up, and comes out with a fair face, like the hypocrite with a widow's house sticking in his throat, and says, "Lord, I thank You I am not as other men are!" There is a man for

you, who brings forth no fruit to perfection! Another one is he who lives right morally and excellently and depends upon his works and hopes to be saved by his righteousness. He comes before God and asks for pardon with a lie in his right hand for he has brought his own self-righteousness with him. Such a man is a fruitless professor. He has brought forth no fruit. That man, again, is a fruitless professor who talks big words about high doctrine and likes sound truth but he does not like sound living—his pretensions are high but not his practice! He can bear to hear it said—

“Once in Christ, in Christ forever.”

But as for himself, he never was in Christ at all, for he neither loves nor serves his Master, but lives in sin that grace may abound. There is another fruitless vine for you!

But why need I stop to pick you out? May the Lord find you out tonight! There are many of you here, concerning whom the curse of Meroz might be uttered, “Curse you, Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” Many of you are content to eat the fat and drink the sweet and bring forth no fruit to God. Nor do you serve Him—lazy Issachars—crouching down like a strong ass between two burdens. You neither speak for Christ, nor pray for Christ, nor give to Christ, nor live to Christ. But having a name to live, while you are dead, wrapping yourselves up in a profession, while you are not living to Christ, nor consecrating your being to Him! Judge what I say. If you were put into the sieve this night, how many of you would come out clean in this matter? Are there not many high-flying professors here, who fly high but who do nothing? Who can talk fast but live as slowly as you like? Who, perhaps, delight in hearing the truth but who never practice the truth in serving their God, nor living to His honor? Such as you, sirs, are the most useless and worthless of all creatures in the world! For, like the vine, you would be honorable if you were fruitful. But without fruit, as the vine is despicable, so are you good for nothing but to be cast out and burned!

2. And now I come to the second question—*Why is it that these men are fruitless, and must be cast away?* The reason is because they have no roots. Many, many professors have not roots. Fine professors they are, beautiful to look at but they have no roots whatever. Don’t you remember your childhood—when you had a little garden of your own, when you plucked some flowers and put them in the ground and said that was your garden? And when you went the next day you found that all the flowers were withered and dead? Such are many professors—pretty flowers, plucked off without roots, having no adherence to the soil, drawing no sap and no nourishment from it. And therefore it is they die and bring forth no fruit! You come to us and say, “I wish to join the church.” We

question you as far as we are able. You solemnly tell us that your hearts are right with God. We baptize you, receive you into our number. But then there was no root in many of you, and after a while you die. When the sun has risen with a burning heat you perish. Or if you maintain a tolerably fair profession there is never any fruit upon you, because you did not first get the root. You got the notion first and then thought you would get the root afterwards. I tremble for many young people in my church—I will not exclude my own church. They get an idea into their heads that they are converted—the work was not true, not genuine, and not real. It was an excitement—it was a stir in the conscience for a while and it will not last. But the worst of it is that though it does not last, they last as professors! When they have been received into the church, they say, “I am sure enough!” Preach about them as long as you please, you cannot get at them. They are church members, they are baptized persons, and they have passed the Rubicon. What more do they need? You can do little for them. I tremble for these—my most hard-hearted hearers I weep before God! But for these people I need to have four eyes to weep with, for who can make an impression upon them when they are firmly persuaded that they are right? They have had the seal of the church that they are right—though notwithstanding that they are deceiving themselves and others and are still “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

My young friends, I do not want to prevent any of you from joining a church. But I do say to you, make sure work of it before you make a profession! I would say to as many of you as love the Lord, come forward and unite with God’s people but, I beseech you, be sure to “search your hearts and try your reins.” Many have thought themselves converted when they were not. Hundreds of thousands have had an impression—a kind of conversion, not real—which for a while endured, but afterwards it passed away as a summer’s dream! It was but a little while ago that I had in my house a gentleman, an excellent man and I believe a true child of God. He told me he had been brought seriously under conviction, on account of sin, through hearing a sermon of late. “But,” he said, “I was baptized in my childhood. When I was but young there was a revival in our village, in New England. Mine was the hardest heart in the village, but I was found out at last. There was scarcely a boy or girl that did not join the church and I was at last brought under deep conviction. I used to weep before God and pray to Him. I went to the minister and told him I was converted, deceived him and was baptized.” And then he went on to tell me that he had dived into the blackest crimes and gone far away, even from the *profession* of religion. After going to college, he had been struck off the church roll on account of wickedness, and that up to this time he had been an infidel and had not so much as *thought* of the things of the kingdom! Take heed, many of you, that you do not get a sham reli-

gion! Many jump into godliness as they would into a job. But they are very glad to jump out of it, too, when they find the world pays them better! And many there are who will just come and say they are the Lord's and they think they are but there is no root in them. Therefore, by-and-by, their impressions pass away. Oh, we have many fruitless professors in our midst because they did not look well to their beginnings! They did not take heed at their starting point. They did not watch well the first dawn—they thought the little farthing daylight of their own hopes was the dawning of the sun of righteousness! They thought the bleeding of their own conscience was a killing by the hand of God! Whereas it was a deeper and better and surer and more entire work that they needed, than that which they received. Let us take heed, my brothers and sisters, that we do not put too much trust in our *experiences*, while it is not yet proved in our beginnings! Let us often go back and begin again! Let us often go to Christ with the old cry—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling.”***

For remember that these bad beginnings have had a great effect in making a man fruitless!

3. And again, thirdly, *what is God's estimation of fruitless professors?* I shall not ask you your own. For there are many men who are professors of religion with whom you might make your fortune very speedily if you could buy them at your price and sell them at their own! There are many, too, that have a very good opinion of themselves which they have gained from the church. The minister thinks well of them; the church thinks well of them; they are respectable people. It is so nice to have them come, it helps the cause, so, to see such respectable persons sitting in the pews! Really, I think he would do for a deacon! Everybody thinks well of him, everybody praises him. Now we have nothing to do with this kind of opinion, tonight—our business is with *God's opinion* of such a man! And God's opinion of a man who makes a profession without being sincere is this—that he is the most useless thing in the world! And now let me try to prove it. Is there anyone who will prove that this man is any use at all? I will ask the church—here is a man who brings forth no fruit and has only a profession. Members of the church, what is the use of this man? Will he comfort any of you in your distress? Will he hold up the pastor's hands in prayer when he is weary? Will he lead the troops to battle? Will he be of any service to you? I see you unanimously lift up your hands and say, “The man is of no use to us whatever if he brings forth no fruit! If his life is not consistent with his profession, strike his name off the church roll! Let him go, he is of no use.” Where has he gone? He has gone to the world. Bring the worldlings up! What do *you* think of this man? He makes a profession of religion. Is he of any use to you? “No,” they say, “we do not need such a fellow as that. The man is Jack-of-both-

sides. He is sometimes a professor of religion and sometimes a sinner in the world—we will have nothing to do with him. Turn him out of our company.” Where shall we send him, then? How shall we dispose of him? He seems to be of no use either to the church or the world. Is he of any use to his family? Ask his eldest son. “John, is your father any good to you?” “No, sir; none at all. He used to pray the Lord to save us with seeming earnestness, and rise from his knees to give vent to his temper. Many a violent blow has he given me without any reasonable provocation. He was always a passionate man. He used to go to chapel on Sunday and take us with him. But then we knew what he used to do on Monday. He would get drunk, or swear. He was never any use to me! He made me an infidel, sir!” Ask his wife. “Well, what do you think of this good husband of yours? He has long made a profession of religion.” “Ah, sir, it is not for me to say a word about my husband but he has made me a miserable woman! I think I would have joined your church long ago if it had not been for his miserable inconsistencies. But really, he has grieved my heart, he has always been a stumbling block to me. And what to do with him, I do not know.” Well, Jane, we will have you out of the kitchen. “What think you of your master? He makes a profession of religion, yet does not live a right life. What do you think of him?” “Well, I did think that Christians were a good sort of people and that I should like to live with them, but if this is Christianity, sir, I will take five pounds a year less to work for a worldly man! That’s all I can say.” Well, what is the use of him? I suppose he does something in business. He is a grand professor. He keeps a shop. Everybody thinks him a most respectable man. Has he not given a hundred pounds just now to the building of a new church? Is he not always known to subscribe liberally to ragged schools? We will ask his men. What do you think of your master? “What do we think of him? Why, we would think a great deal more of him if he would give us a half-crown a week more wages, for he is the worst paymaster in the parish.” “Perhaps that is nothing—what do you think of him?” “Why, that he is an unutterable cant! Some of us did go to a place of worship but we are honest, and we would rather stay away than go with such a miserable hypocrite.”

I am describing real cases and not fictions. I need not to go farther than between this and London Bridge to knock at the door and wake them up, some of them! What is the good of such professors? If they would speak fairly out and say, “I am not a Christian,” there would be some sense in it. For if Baal is God, let Baal be served. And if the world is worth serving, let a man serve it outright! But if God is God and a man lives in sin and talks about divine grace, then of what use is he? God Himself will disown him! Ask Him if this man has been of any use and He replies, “No, of no use whatever.” The vine is of no use unless it brings forth fruit—and this man, making a profession, is worse than worth-

less—because he does not live up to it. My dear friends, I would not say an extravagant thing, but I will say this very coolly—if any of you who make a profession of religion are deceiving others by not living up to it, I do request you—and I say it advisedly—I do request you to give up your profession unless God gives you grace to live up to it! Do not, I beseech you, halt between two opinions. If God is God, serve Him and do it thoroughly. Do not tell lies about it. If Baal is God, if he is a nice master, if you would like to serve him and win his wages, serve him! But do not mix the two together. Be one thing, or else the other. Renounce your profession and serve the devil thoroughly, or else keep your profession and serve God with all your heart—one thing, or else the other. I solemnly exhort you to choose which you will have, but never think that you can keep both, for “no man can serve two masters.” “You cannot serve God and mammon.”

4. And now let me close up by mentioning *what is to become of this fruitless tree*. We are told it is to be devoured in the fire. When an old vine is pulled off the wall, after having brought forth no fruit, what becomes of it? You know there are a lot of weeds raked up in a corner of the garden and the gardener, without taking any notice of it, just throws the vine on the heap of weeds and it is burned up. If it were any other kind of tree, he would at least reserve it for chopping up to make a fire within the master’s house. But this is such an ignominious thing, he throws it away in the corner and burns it up with the weeds! If it were a stout old oak, it might have the funeral of the Yule log, with honor in its burning and brightness in its flame. But the fruitless vine is treated with contempt and left to smolder with the weeds, the refuse and the rubbish. It is a miserable thing. Just so with professors: All men who love not God must perish. But those who profess to love Him, and do not, shall perish with singular ignominy! “They shall not come into the sepulchers of the kings.” Something like that ancient king of whom it was said, “He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.” The damnation of a professor will be the most horrible and ignominious sight that ever hell itself has seen! When Satan fell from heaven with his black Satanic malice against God, there was a kind of grandeur in his devilry. There was an awful, terrific sublimity in his damnation. And when a great blasphemer and a hard swearer shall be sent, at last, to perdition, there shall be something of sublimity in it—because he has been consistent with his profession. But when a professor of religion finds himself in hell, it shall be the most miserable, contemptible and yet terrible mode of damnation wherewith men were ever damned!

I think I see honest blasphemers lifting themselves from their chains of fire and hissing between their teeth at the minister who comes there, after having been a deceiver—“Aha! Aha! Aha! Are you here with us? You

did warn us of our drunkenness and tell us of our curses! Ah, are you come into the drunkard's hell, yourself?" "Pshaw!" says another, "that is your strict Pharisee. Ah, I remember how he told me one night that I would perish unless I made a profession of religion. Take that, sir!" And he spits upon him. "You are a loathsome thing! I perished but I served my master well. You—you pretended to serve God and yet you are a sneaking hypocrite!" Says another, yelling from the corner of the pit, "Let us have a Methodist hymn, sir—quote a promise from the Bible! Tell us about election. Let us have a little of your fine preaching now." And round hell there goes the hiss and the, "Aha! Aha! Aha!" And the yell of spitefulness and scorn upon the man who professed to be a Christian but became a castaway because his heart was not right in the matter. I confess I should dread above all things the unutterable hell of hells of hypocritical apostates—of men that stand in the ranks, profess to love God, prate of godliness, sit in the pews and uphold Christianity! They take the sacrament and speak about communion, stand up to pray and talk about being heard for their faith—who are all the while committing abominations and under cover of their profession are cheating the poor, robbing the fatherless and doing all kinds of iniquity! I confess I as much dread the excess of their damnation above the damnation of others, as I dread to be damned at all! It is as if in hell another hell had been made to damn those that sin above others—to damn them after being damned—for hypocrites, for men who have been with us and not of us, who professed to be Christ's and yet have been mean deceivers, after all! Oh, sirs, if you would not make your chains more heavy, if you would not stir the fire to a more furious heat, if you would not make your yells more hideous—quit your professions this night—if you are not worthy of them! Go out of this place and send in your resignation to the church. Or else, sirs, be honest and bend your knee before God and ask Him to search you and try you and make you sincere and upright before Him. Be one thing, or else the other. Do not cloak yourselves in the robes of sanctity to hide the corruptions that all the while fester beneath! Stand out boldly, brave sinners, and do not be mean, sneaking sinners that wear the masks of saints! "What is the vine more than any other tree?" Without fruit it is worse than any other! It must perish more dolefully, more horribly than any other if there is no fruit brought to perfection on it. Does not that shake us? Ah, it will shake you, very likely, that do not want the shaking but the men that need awakening will stay just as they were. It will go into the hearts of some of you, like the cry, "Howl, Moab, howl, Moab!" But alas, Moab will not howl. You will weep for Kirhareseth but Kirhareseth will not weep for herself. You will weep for your hypocritical friends, but they will rub their eyes and say, "A strong sermon. But it has nothing to do with me." And they will go out with cool presumption—sin

with one hand and take the sacramental cup with the other—sing the lascivious song one night and then sing—

“Jesus, lover of my soul,”

the day after! They will meet Christ here, and take the devil yonder, and bid him God speed in all his freaks of devilry! Ah, sirs, sirs, sirs! Take heed, take heed, I beseech you, of this matter! Let us each search our hearts lest we should have been deceived. And may God bring us to a right understanding in this matter that we may be clear before Him. “Search me, O God and know my ways, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there are any wicked ways in me. And lead me in the way everlasting.”

And now I must not send you away until I have had a word with my friend in the aisle there. He says, “I like that, I like that. I am no professor, I am not, I am all right. No one can call *me* a hypocrite.” Well, my dear friend, I am very glad you are not, because you say you are no Christian! But let me tell you, you must not expect to be better off for that. Suppose two men are brought up before the Lord Mayor and one says, “Your worship, I am an honest man, and not guilty.” And he blushes that an imputation should be cast on his character. Well, he is proved to be guilty, and gets committed to prison for three months. Up comes the other one and says, “Your worship, I am a guilty man. I always was a rogue, and I always shall be. I don’t make any profession at all.” “I think I must give you six months,” says his worship, “for really, I think you must be the more determined rascal of the two.” So if any of you say, “I do not make a profession, I shall be all right,” let me tell you that to make a lying profession is a very fearful thing, but for you to think of getting *off* because you make *no profession* at all is equally bad! Take heed you do not deceive yourselves! It must be the new heart and the right spirit with God, or else profession or no profession, we must perish! Oh, that God would give us grace to go to our houses and cry to Him for mercy, and would help us to repent of our sins, and bring us to put our trust simply and wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ! So should we be saved now, and saved forever! Amen.

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JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE

NO. 126

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 5, 1857,
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Being justified freely by His grace, through
 the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”
 Romans 3:24.*

THE hill of comfort is the hill of Calvary. The house of consolation is built with the wood of the cross. The temple of heavenly cordials is founded upon the split rock, split by the spear which pierced its side. No scene in sacred history ever gladdens the soul like the scene on Calvary—

*“Is it not strange, the dark hour
 That ever dawned on sinful earth
 Should touch the heart with softer power
 For comfort, than an angel’s mirth?
 That to the cross the mourner’s eyes should turn
 Sooner than where the stars of Bethlehem burn?”*

Nowhere does the soul ever find such consolation as on that very spot where misery reigned, where woe triumphed, where agony reached its climax. There grace has dug a fountain which always gushes with waters pure as crystal, each drop capable of alleviating the woes and the agonies of mankind! You have had your seasons of woe, my brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. And you will confess it was not at Olivet that you found comfort, not on the hill of Sinai, nor on Tabor. But Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha have been a means of comfort to you. The bitter herbs of Gethsemane have often taken away the bitters of our life. The scourge of Gabbatha has often scourged away our cares and the groans of Calvary have put all other groans to flight.

We have, this morning, then, a subject which I trust may be the means of comforting God’s saints, seeing it takes its rise at the cross and from there runs on in a rich stream of perennial blessing to all believers. You note, *we have in our text*, first of all, the redemption of Christ Jesus; secondly, *the justification of sinners flowing from it*; and then thirdly, *the manner of the giving of this justification*, “freely by His grace.”

I. First, then, we have THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN OR BY CHRIST JESUS.

The figure of redemption is very simple and has been very frequently used in Scripture. When a prisoner has been taken captive and has been made a slave by some barbarous power, it has been usual, before he could be set free, that a ransom price should be paid. Now we, being, by the Fall of Adam, prone to guiltiness, and indeed virtually guilty, were by the irreproachable judgment of God given up to the vengeance of the law. We were given into the hands of justice—justice claimed us to be his bond slaves forever, unless we could pay a ransom, whereby our souls could be redeemed. We were, indeed, poor as owlets, we had nothing wherewith to bless ourselves. We were, as our hymn has worded it, “bankrupt debtors.” All we had was sold. We were left naked and poor and miserable and we could by no means find a ransom. It was just then that Christ stepped in, stood Sponsor for us, and in the place of all believers, paid the ransom price, that we might in that hour be delivered from the curse of the law and the vengeance of God! We could then go on our way, clean, free and justified by His blood!

Let me just endeavor to show you some qualities of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. You will remember *the multitude* He has redeemed. Not I, alone, nor you, alone, but “a multitude that no man can number.” A number which shall as far exceed the stars of heaven, as they exceed all mortal reckoning! Christ has bought for Himself some out of every kingdom and nation and tongue under heaven! He has redeemed from among men some of every rank, from the highest to the lowest, some of every color—black and white—some of every standing in society, the best and the worst, for some of all sorts has Jesus Christ given Himself a ransom that they might be redeemed unto Himself!

Now, concerning this ransom, we have to observe that it was all paid and all paid at once. When Christ redeemed His people, He did it thoroughly. He did not leave a single debt unpaid, nor yet one farthing for them to settle afterwards. God demanded of Christ the payment for the sins of all His people. Christ stood forward and to the utmost farthing paid whatever His people owed. The sacrifice of Calvary was not a partial payment—it was not a partial exoneration—it was a complete and perfect payment and it obtained a complete and perfect remittal of all the debts of all believers that have lived, do live, or shall live to the very end of time! On that day when Christ hung on the cross, He did not leave a single farthing for us to pay as a satisfaction to God. He did not leave, from a thread even to a shoelace that He had not satisfied. The whole of the demands of the law were paid then and there by Jehovah Jesus, the great high priest of all His people! And blessed be His name, He paid it all at once, too! So priceless was the ransom, so princely and munificent was the price demanded for our souls, one might have thought it would

have been marvelous if Christ had paid it by installments—some of it now and some of it then. Kings' ransoms have sometimes been paid part at once and part in dues afterwards to run through years. But not so our Savior—once and for all He gave Himself as a sacrifice. At once He counted down the price and said, "It is finished," leaving nothing for Him to do, nor for us to accomplish. He did not drivel out a partial payment and then declare that He would come again to die, or that He would again suffer, or that He would again obey. But down upon the nail, to the utmost farthing, the ransom of all His elect was paid and a full receipt given to them. Christ nailed that receipt to His cross and said, "It is done, it is done. I have taken away the handwriting of ordinances; I have nailed it to the cross. Who is he that shall condemn My people or lay anything to their charge? For I have blotted out like a cloud their transgressions and like a thick cloud their sins!"

And when Christ paid this ransom, you will notice that He did it all Himself! He was very particular about that. Simon, the Pyrenean, might bear the cross but Simon, the Pyrenean, might not be nailed to it. That sacred circle of Calvary was kept for Christ, alone. Two thieves were with Him there, not righteous men, lest any should have said that the death of those two righteous men helped the Savior. Two thieves hung there with Him, that men might see that there was majesty in His misery and that He could pardon men and show His sovereignty even when He was dying! There were no righteous men to suffer. No disciples shared His death. Peter was not dragged there to be beheaded. John was not nailed to a cross side by side with Him. He was left there alone! He says, "I have trodden the winepress alone. And of the people there was none with Me." The whole of the tremendous debt was put upon His shoulders! The whole weight of the sins of all His people was placed upon Him! Once He seemed to stagger under it—"Father, if it is possible." But again He stood upright—"Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done." The whole of the punishment of His people was distilled into one cup—no mortal lips might give it so much as a solitary sip! When He put it to His own lips, it was so bitter, He well near spurned it. "Let this cup pass from Me." But His love for His people was so strong that He took the cup in both His hands and—

***"At one tremendous draught of love
He drank damnation dry,"***

for all His people! He drank it all, He endured all, He suffered all; so that now and forever there are no flames of hell for them, no racks of torment! They have no eternal woes—Christ has suffered all they ought to have suffered and they must, they shall go free! The work was completely done by Himself, without a helper!

And note, again it was *accepted*. In truth, it was a goodly ransom. What could equal it? A soul “exceedingly sorrowful even unto death”; a body torn with torture; a death of the most inhuman kind, and an agony of such a character that tongue cannot speak of it, nor can even man’s mind imagine its horror! It was a goodly price. But say, was it accepted? There have been prices paid, sometimes, or rather offered, which never were accepted by the party to whom they were offered, and therefore, the slave did not go free. But this was accepted. I will show you the evidence. When Christ declared that He would pay the debt for all His people, God sent the officer to arrest Him for it. He arrested Him in the Garden of Gethsemane and seizing upon Him, he dragged him to the bar of Pilate, to the bar of Herod and to the judgment seat of Caiaphas—the payment was all made and Christ was put into the grave! He was there locked up in vile durance until the acceptance was ratified in heaven. He slept there a portion of three days in His tomb. It was declared that the ratification was to be this—the Surety was to go His way as soon as His suretyship engagements had been fulfilled. Now let your minds picture the buried Jesus. He is in the sepulcher. ‘Tis true He has paid all the debt, but the receipt is not yet given. He slumbers in that narrow tomb. Fastened in with a seal upon a giant stone, He sleeps still in His grave. Not yet has the acceptance been given from God. The angels have not yet come from heaven to say, “The deed is done. God has accepted Your sacrifice.” Now is the crisis of this world! It hangs trembling in the balance. Will God accept the ransom, or will He not? We shall see. An angel comes from heaven with exceeding brightness. He rolls away the stone. And forth comes the captive, with no manacles upon His hands, with the grave clothes left behind Him! He is free, never more to suffer, never more to die. Now—

***“If Jesus had not paid the debt,
He never had been at freedom set.”***

If God had not accepted His sacrifice, He would have been in His tomb at this moment! He never would have risen from His grave! But His resurrection was a pledge of God’s accepting Him—He said, “I have had a claim upon You to this hour. That claim is now paid. Go Your way.” And death gave up his royal captive, the stone was rolled into the garden and the conqueror came forth, leading captivity captive!

And, moreover, God gave a second proof of acceptance *for He took His only-begotten Son to heaven*, and set Him at His right hand, far above all principalities and powers! And therein He meant to say to Him, “Sit upon the throne, for You have done the mighty deed. All Your works and all Your miseries are accepted as the ransom of men.” O my beloved, think what a grand sight it must have been when Christ ascended into glory! What a noble certificate it must have been of His Father’s acceptance of

Him! Do you not think you see the scene on earth? It is very simple. A few disciples are standing upon a hill and Christ mounts into the air in slow and solemn movement, as if an angel sped His way by gentle degrees, like mist or exhalation from the lake into the skies. Can you imagine what is going on up yonder? Can you for a moment conceive how, when the mighty conqueror entered the gates of heaven, the angels met Him—

***“They brought His chariot from on high,
To bear Him to His throne,
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
‘The glorious work is done!’”***

Can you think how loud were the plaudits when He entered the gates of heaven? Can you conceive how they pressed on one another to behold how He came conquering from the flight? Do you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the redeemed saints come to behold the Savior and the Lord? They had desired to see Him and now their eyes behold Him in flesh and blood, the conqueror over death and hell! Do you think you see Him, with hell at His chariot wheels, with death dragged as a captive through the royal streets of heaven? Oh, what a spectacle was there that day! No Roman warrior ever had such a triumph. None ever saw such a majestic sight! The pomp of a whole universe, the royalty of entire creation—cherubim and seraphim and all powers created—did swell the show! And God Himself, the Everlasting One, crowned all, when He pressed His Son to His bosom and said, “Well done, well done! You have finished the work which I gave You to do. Rest here forever, My accepted one.” Ah, but He never would have had that triumph if He had not paid all the debt. Unless His Father had accepted the ransom, He had never been so honored! But because it was accepted, therefore did He so triumph. So far, then, concerning the ransom.

II. And now, by the help of God’s Spirit, let me address myself TO THE EFFECT OF THE RANSOM. Being justified—“justified freely by His grace through the redemption.”

Now, *what is the meaning of justification?* Divines will puzzle you, if you ask them. I must try the best I can to make justification plain and simple—even to the comprehension of a child. There is not such a thing as justification to be had on earth for mortal men except in one way. Justification, you know, is a forensic term—it is employed always in a legal sense. A prisoner is brought to the bar of justice to be tried. There is only one way whereby that prisoner can be justified—he must be found not guilty and if he is found not guilty, then he is justified—that is, he is proved to be a just man. If you find that man guilty, you cannot justify him. The Queen may pardon him but she cannot justify him. The deed is not a justifiable one—if he is guilty concerning it—he cannot be justified

on account of it. He may be *pardoned*. But no royalty, itself, can ever wash that man's character. He is as much a real criminal when he is pardoned as before. There is no means among men of justifying a man of an accusation which is laid against him except by his being proved not guilty. Now, the wonder of wonders is that we are proved guilty and yet we are justified—the guilty verdict has been brought in against us—and yet, notwithstanding, we are justified! Can any earthly tribunal do that? No. It remained for the ransom of Christ to effect that which is an impossibility to any tribunal upon earth! We are all guilty. Read the 23rd verse, immediately preceding the text—“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” There the verdict of guilty is brought in, and yet we are immediately afterwards said to be justified freely by His grace!

Now, allow me to explain *the way whereby God justifies a sinner*. I am about to suppose an impossible case. A prisoner has been tried and condemned to death. He is a guilty man. He cannot be justified because he is guilty. But now, suppose for a moment that such a thing as this could happen—that some second party could be introduced who could take all that man's guilt upon himself! Who could, in effect, change places with that man and by some mysterious process, which of course is impossible with men, *become that man*. Or take that man's character upon himself. He, the righteous man, putting the rebel in his place and making the rebel a righteous man—we cannot do that in our courts. If I were to go before a judge and he should agree that I should be committed for a year's imprisonment instead of some wretch who was condemned yesterday to a year's imprisonment, I could not take his *guilt*! I might take his *punishment*, but not his guilt. Now, what flesh and blood cannot do, Jesus Christ, by His redemption, did. Here I stand, the sinner; I mention myself as the representative of you all; I am condemned to die. God says, “I will condemn that man, I must, I will—I will punish him.” Christ comes in, puts me aside and stands Himself in my place. When the plea is demanded, Christ says, “Guilty.” He takes my guilt to be His own guilt! When the punishment is to be executed, Christ comes forth. “Punish Me,” He says—“I have put My righteousness on that man and I have taken that man's sins on Me. Father, punish Me and consider that man to have been Me. Let him reign in heaven. Let Me suffer misery. Let Me endure his curse and let him receive My blessing.” This marvelous doctrine of the changing of places of Christ with poor sinners is a doctrine of revelation! It never could have been conceived by Nature! Let me, lest I should have made a mistake, explain myself again. The way whereby God saves a sinner is not, as some say, by passing over the penalty; no! The penalty has been paid. It is the putting of another person in the rebel's place. The rebel must die. God says he must. Christ says, “I will be the

Substitute for the rebel. The rebel shall take My place. I will take his." God consents to it. No earthly monarch could have power to consent to such a change, but the God of heaven has a right to do as He pleases! In His infinite mercy He consented to the arrangement. "Son of My love," He said, "You must stand in the sinner's place. You must suffer what he ought to have suffered. You must be accounted guilty just as he was accounted guilty. Only then will I look upon the sinner in another light. I will look at him as if he were You. I will accept him as if he were My only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth. I will give him a crown in heaven and I will take him to My heart forever and ever." This is the way we are saved. "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

And now, let me further go on to *explain some of the characteristics* of this justification. As soon as a repenting sinner is justified, remember, he is justified for *all* his sins. Here stands a guilty man. The moment he believes in Christ, he receives his pardon at once and his sins are no longer his. They are cast into the depths of the sea. They are laid upon the shoulders of Christ and they are gone. The man stands a guiltless man in the sight of God, accepted in the beloved. "What?" you say. "Do you mean that literally?" Yes I do. That is the doctrine of justification by faith. Man ceases to be regarded by divine justice as a guilty being. The moment he believes on Christ, his guilt is all taken away. But I will go a step further. The moment the man believes in Christ, he ceases to be guilty in God's esteem! And what is more, he becomes righteous, he becomes meritorious—the moment when Christ takes his sins *he* takes Christ's righteousness, so that when God looks upon the sinner who but an hour ago was dead in sins, He looks upon him with as much love and affection as He ever looked upon His Son! Christ Himself has said it—"As the Father loved Me, so have I loved you." He loves us as much as His Father loved Him! Can you believe such a doctrine as that? Does it not pass all thought? Well, it is a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine whereby we must hope to be saved. Can I to any unenlightened person illustrate this thought better? I will give him the parable we have given to us in the prophets—the parable of Joshua the high priest. Joshua comes in, clothed in filthy garments—those filthy garments represent his sins. Take away the filthy garments. That is pardon. Put a miter on his head. Clothe him in royal raiment—make him rich and fair—that is justification. But where do these garments come from? And where do those rags go? Why the rags that Joshua had on go to Christ and the garments put on Joshua are the garments that Christ wore! The sinner and Christ do just what Jonathan and David did. Jonathan put his robes on David. David gave Jonathan his garments—so Christ takes our sins—we take Christ's

righteousness and it is by a glorious substitution and interchange of places, that sinners go free and are justified by His grace!

“But,” says one, “no one is justified like that, till he dies.” Believe me, he is—

***“The moment a sinner believes
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives—
Salvation in full, through His blood.”***

If that young man over there has really believed in Christ this morning, realizing by a spiritual experience what I have attempted to describe, he is as much justified in God’s sight right now as he will be when he stands before the throne of God! Not even the glorified spirits above are more acceptable to God than the poor man below who is once justified by divine grace! It is a perfect washing, it is perfect pardon, perfect imputation—we are fully, freely and wholly accepted through Christ our Lord! Just one more word, here, and then I will leave this matter of justification. Those who are once justified are justified irreversibly. As soon as a sinner takes Christ’s place and Christ takes the sinner’s place, there is no fear of a second change! If Christ has once paid the debt, the debt is paid and it will never be asked for again! If you are pardoned, you are pardoned once and forever! God does not give man a free pardon under His own promise and then afterwards retract it and punish the man—far from God to do such a thing! He says, “I have punished Christ. You may go free.” And after that, we may “rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” that, “being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And now I hear one cry, “That is an extraordinary doctrine!” Well, so some may think, but let me say to you, it is a doctrine professed by all Protestant churches though they may not preach it! It is the doctrine of the church of England, it is the doctrine of Luther, it is the doctrine of the Presbyterian church—it is professedly the doctrine of all Christian churches—and if it seems strange in your ears, it is because your ears are estranged and not because the doctrine is a strange one! It is the doctrine of holy writ that none can condemn whom God justifies, and that none can accuse those for whom Christ has died, for they are totally free from sin! So that, as one of the prophets has it, God sees no sin in Jacob, nor iniquity in Israel. In the moment they believe, their sins being imputed to Christ, the sins cease to be theirs and Christ’s righteousness is imputed to them and accounted theirs, so that, by God’s grace, they are accepted!

III. And now I close up with the third point, upon which I shall be brief and I hope very earnest—THE MANNER OF GIVING THIS JUSTIFICATION. John Bunyan would have it that there are some whose mouths are set a watering for this great gift of Justification! Are there not some

here who are saying, "Oh, if I could be justified! But, sir, can I be justified? I have been a drunkard, I have been a swearer. I have been everything that is vile. Can I be justified? Will Christ take my black sins and am I to take His white robes?" Yes, poor soul, if you desire it. If God has made you willing, if you confess your sins, Christ is willing to take your rags and give you His righteousness, to be yours forever. "Well, but how is it to be obtained?" one asks. "Must I be a holy man for many years and then get it?" Listen! "Freely by His grace." "*Freely*," because there is no price to be paid for it! "*By His grace*," because we do not deserve it! "But, O sir, I have been praying and I do not think God will forgive me unless I do something to deserve it." I tell you, sir, if you bring in any of your deservings, you shall never have it! God gives away His Justification *freely*. If you bring anything to pay for it, He will throw it in your face and will not give His Justification to you. He gives it away *freely*. Old Rowland Hill once went preaching at a fair. He noticed the chapmen selling their wares by auction. So Rowland said, "I am going to hold an auction, too, to sell wine and milk, without money and without price. My friends over there," he said, "find a great difficulty to get you up to their price—my difficulty is to bring you down to mine!" So it is with men. If I could preach Justification to be bought by you at a sovereign a piece, who would go out of the place without being justified? If I could preach Justification to you by walking a hundred miles, would we not be pilgrims tomorrow morning, every one of us? If I were to preach Justification which would consist in whippings and torture, there are very few here who would not whip themselves and that severely, too! But when it is *freely, freely, freely*, men turn away! "What? Am I to have it for nothing at all, without doing anything?" Yes, sir, you are to have it for *nothing*, or else not at all. It is "*freely*." "But may I not go to Christ, lay some claim to His mercy and say, Lord, justify me because I am not as bad as others?" It will not do, sir, because it is "by His grace." "But may I not indulge a hope, because I go to church twice a day?" No, sir, it is "by His grace." "But may I not offer this plea that I mean to be better?" No, sir, it is "by His grace." You insult God by bringing your counterfeit coin to pay for His treasures!

Oh, what poor ideas men have of the value of Christ's gospel if they think they can buy it! God will not have your rusty farthings to buy heaven with! A rich man once, when he was dying, had a notion that he could buy a place in heaven by building a row of almshouses. A good man stood by his bedside and said, "How much more are you going to leave?" "Twenty thousand pounds." he said "That would not buy enough for your foot to stand on in heaven, for the streets are made of gold there, and therefore, of what value can your gold be? It would be accounted nothing when the very streets are paved with it." No, friends, we cannot

buy heaven with gold nor good works, nor prayers, nor anything in the world! So how can we get it? Why we ask for it! As many of us as know ourselves to be sinners may have Christ for asking for Him! Do you know that you need Christ? You may have Christ! “Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” But if you cleave to your own notions and say, “No, sir, I mean to do a great many good things, and *then* I will believe in Christ.” Sir, you will be damned if you hold onto such delusions! I earnestly warn you, you cannot be saved so. “Well, but are we not to do good works?” Certainly you are—but you are not to trust in them! You must trust in Christ wholly and *then* do good works afterwards. “But,” says one, “I think if I were to do a few good works, it would be a little recommendation when I came.” It would not, sir. They would be no recommendation at all. Let a beggar come to your house in white kid gloves and say he is very badly off and needs some charity—would the white kid gloves recommend him to your charity? Would a good new hat that he has been buying this morning recommend him to your charity? “No,” you would say, “you are a miserable imposter. You do not need anything and you shall not have anything either! Out with you!”

The best livery for a beggar is rags, and the best livery for a sinner to go to Christ in is for him to go just as he is—with nothing but sin about him! “But no,” you say, “I must be a little better and then I think Christ will save me!” You cannot get any better, try as long as you please. And besides—to use a paradox—if you were to get better, you would be all the worse, for the worse you are, the better to come to Christ! If you are all unholy—come to Christ! If you feel your sin and renounce it, come to Christ! Though you have been the most debased and abandoned soul, come to Christ! If you feel yourself to have nothing about you that can recommend you, come to Christ—

**“Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude.”**

I do not say this to urge any man to continue in sin. God forbid! If you continue in sin, you must not come to Christ. You cannot. Your sins will hamper you. You cannot be chained to your galley oar—the oar of your sins—yet come to Christ and be a free man. No, sir, it is *repentance*. It is the immediate *leaving off the sin*. But mark you, neither by repentance nor by the leaving of your sins, can you be saved. It is Christ, Christ, Christ—Christ only!

But I know you will go away, many of you, and try to build up your own Babel tower to get to heaven. Some of you will go one way to work and some another. You will go the ceremony way—you will lay the foundation of the structure with infant baptism, build confirmation on it and the Lord’s supper. “I shall go to heaven,” you say. “Do not I keep Good Friday and Christmas? I am a better man than those dissenters! I am a

most extraordinary man. Do I not say more prayers than anyone?" You will be a long while going up that treadmill before you get an inch higher—that is not the way to get to the stars! One says, "I will go and study the Bible, and believe right doctrine, and I have no doubt that by believing right doctrine I shall be saved." Indeed you will not! You can be no more saved by believing right doctrine than you can by doing right actions! "There," says another, "I like that; I shall go and believe in Christ, and live as I like." Indeed you will not! For if you believe in Christ, He will not let you live as your flesh likes. By His Spirit He will constrain you to mortify its affections and lusts; if He gives you the grace to make you believe, He will give you the grace to live a holy life afterwards—if He gives you faith, He gives you good works afterwards! You cannot believe in Christ unless you renounce every fault and resolve to serve Him with full purpose of heart. I think at last I hear a sinner say, "Is that the only door? And may I venture through it? Then I will! But I do not quite understand you. I am something like poor Tiff, in that remarkable book, '*Dred.*' They talk a great deal about a door, but I cannot see the door. They talk a great deal about the way, but I cannot see the way, for if poor Tiff could see the way, he would take these children away by it. They talk about fighting, but I do not see anyone to fight, or else I would fight."

Let me explain it then. I find in the Bible, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." What have you to do, but to believe this and trust in Him? You will never be disappointed with such a faith as that! Let me give you another illustration I have given hundreds of times but I cannot find another as good, so I must give it again—faith is something like this. There is a story told of a captain of a man-of-war, whose son—a young lad—was very fond of running up the rigging of the ship. And one time, running after a monkey, he ran up the mast till at last he got on to the main truck. Now, the main truck, you are aware, is like a large round table put onto the mast so that when the boy was on the maintop. There was plenty of room for him, but the difficulty was—to use the best explanation I can—that he could not reach the mast that was under the table, he was not tall enough to get down from this maintop, reach the mast and so descend. There he was on the maintop—he managed to get up there, somehow or other—but down he never could. His father saw that and he looked up in horror. What was he to do? In a few moments his son would fall down and be dashed to pieces! He was clinging to the maintop with all his might, but in a little time he would fall down on the deck, and there he would be—a mangled corpse. The captain called for a speaking trumpet. He put it to his mouth and shouted, "Boy, the next time the ship lurches, throw yourself into the sea." It was, in truth, his only way

of escape. He might be picked up out of the sea, but he could not be rescued if he fell on the deck! The poor boy looked down on the sea. It was a long way. He could not bear the idea of throwing himself into the roaring current beneath him. He thought it looked angry and dangerous. How could he cast himself down into it? So he clung to the maintop with all his might, though there was no doubt that he must soon let go and perish. The father called for a gun and pointing it up at him, said, "Boy, the next time the ship lurches, throw yourself into the sea, or I'll shoot you!" He knew his father would keep his word. The ship lunched on one side, over went the boy into the sea and out went brawny arms after him! The sailors rescued him and brought him on deck.

Now, we, like the boy, are in a position of extraordinary danger, by nature, which neither you nor I can possibly escape by ourselves. Unfortunately, we have got some good works of our own, like that maintop, and we cling to them so fondly that we will never give them up. Christ knows that unless we give them up, we shall be dashed to pieces, at the last, for that rotten trust must ruin us. He, therefore, says, "Sinner, let go of your own trust and drop into the sea of My love." We look down and say, "Can I be saved by trusting in God? He looks as if He is angry with me, and I could not trust Him." Ah, will not mercy's tender cry persuade you?—"He that believes shall be saved." Must the weapon of destruction be pointed directly at you? Must you hear the dreadful threat—"He that believes not shall be damned?" It is with you now as with that boy—your position is one of imminent peril in itself and your slighting the Father's counsel is a matter of more terrible alarm—it makes peril more perilous! You must do it, or else you perish! Let go of your hold! That is faith when the poor sinner lets go of his hold, drops down and so is saved! And the very thing which looks as if it would destroy him, is the means of his being saved! Oh, believe on Christ, poor sinners! Believe on Christ! You who know your guilt and misery, come! Cast yourselves upon Him! Come and trust my Master, and as He lives, before whom I stand, you shall never trust Him in vain! No, but you shall find yourselves forgiven and go your way, by His grace, rejoicing in Christ Jesus!

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SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

NO. 127

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON EASTER SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 12, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”
Ephesians 2:1.

IT might naturally be expected that I should have selected the topic of the resurrection on what is usually called the Easter Sabbath. I shall not do so—for although I have read portions which refer to that glorious subject, I have had pressed on my mind a subject which is not the resurrection of Christ but which is in some measure connected with it—the resurrection of lost and ruined man by the Spirit of God in this life.

The apostle is here speaking, you will observe, of the church at Ephesus, and indeed of all those who were chosen in Christ Jesus, accepted in Him and redeemed with His blood. And he says of them, “You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”

What a solemn sight is presented to us by a dead body! When last evening, trying to realize the thought, it utterly overcame me; the thought is overwhelming that soon this body of mine must be a carnival for worms. That in and out of these places where my eyes are glistening, foul things, the offspring of loathsomeness, shall crawl! That this body must be stretched in still, cold, abject, passive death—must then become a noxious, nauseous thing, cast out even by those who loved me, who will say, “Bury my dead out of my sight.” Perhaps you can scarcely, in the moment I can afford you, appropriate the idea to yourselves. Does it not seem a strange thing that you who have *walked* to this place this morning shall be *carried* to your graves? That the eyes with which you now behold me shall soon be glazed in everlasting darkness? That the tongues which just now moved in song, shall soon be silent lumps of clay? And that your strong and stalwart frame, now standing in this place, will soon be unable to move a muscle and become a loathsome thing—the brother of the worm and the sister of corruption? You can scarcely get hold of the idea! Death does such awful work with us—it is such a vandal with this mortal fabric—it so tears to pieces this fair thing that God has built up that we can scarcely bear to contemplate its works of ruin!

Now, endeavor, as well as you can, to get the idea of a corpse—and when you have done so, please understand that that is the metaphor employed in my text—to set forth the condition of your soul by nature.

Just as the body is dead, incapable, unable, unfeeling and soon about to become corrupt and putrid, so are we, if we are unquickened by divine grace! We are dead in trespasses and sins, having within us death which is capable of developing itself in worse and worse stages of sin and wickedness until all of us here, left by God's grace, should become loathsome beings! We are as loathsome through sin and wickedness, even as the corpse through natural decay! Understand that the doctrine of the Holy Scripture is that man, by nature, since the fall, is dead. He is a corrupt and ruined thing! In a *spiritual* sense he is utterly and entirely dead. And if any of us shall come to spiritual life, it must be by the quickening of God's Spirit vouchsafed to us sovereignly through the good will of God the Father. Not for any merits of our own, but entirely of His own abounding and infinite grace!

Now, this morning I trust I shall not be tedious. I shall endeavor to make the subject as interesting as possible and also endeavor to be brief. The general doctrine of this morning is that every man who is born into the world is spiritually dead and that spiritual life must be given by the Holy Spirit—and can be obtained from no other source! That general doctrine, I shall illustrate in rather a singular way. You remember that our Savior raised three dead persons. I do not find that during His lifetime He caused more than three resurrections. The first was the young maiden, *the daughter of Jairus* who, when she lay on her bed, dead, rose up to life at the single utterance of Christ, "*Talitha cum!*"! The second was the case of *the widow's son* who was on his bier, about to be carried to his tomb. And Jesus raised him up to life by saying, "Young man, I say unto you, Arise." The third and most memorable case was that of Lazarus, who was not on his bed, nor on his bier, but in his tomb! Yes, and corrupt, too! But notwithstanding that, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the voice of His omnipotence, crying, "Lazarus, come forth," brought him out of the tomb!

I shall use these three facts as illustrations of *the different states of men*, though they are all thoroughly dead; secondly, as illustrations of *the different means of divine grace used for raising them*, though, after all, the same great agency is employed; and in the third place, as illustrations of *the later experience of quickened men*, for though to a great degree they are the same, yet there are some points of difference.

I. I shall begin by noticing, then, first of all, THE CONDITION OF MEN BY NATURE. Men by nature are all dead. There is Jairus' daughter. She lies on her bed. She seems as if she were alive. Her mother has scarcely ceased to kiss her brow, her hand is still in her father's loving grasp and he can scarcely think that she is dead—but she is dead—as thoroughly dead as she ever can be! Next comes the case of the young man brought out of his grave. He is more than dead, he has begun to be corrupt, the signs of decay are upon his face and they are carrying him to his tomb. Yes, though there are more manifestations of death about him, he is no

more dead than the other! He is just as dead—they are both dead and death really knows no degrees. The third case goes still further in the manifestation of death, for it is the case of which Martha, using strong words, said, “Lord, by this time he stinks, for he has been dead four days.” And yet, mark you, the daughter of Jairus was as dead as Lazarus, though the manifestation of death was not so complete in her case! All were alike dead. I have in my congregation some blessed beings, fair to look upon. Fair, I mean, in their character, as well as their outward appearance. They have about them everything that is good and lovely. But mark this, if they are unregenerate they are still dead! That girl, dead in the room, upon her bed, had little about her that could show her death. Not yet had the loving fingers closed the eyelids. There seemed to be a light still lingering in her eyes, like a lily just nipped off. She was as fair as life itself! The worm had not yet begun to gnaw her cheek, the flush had not yet faded from her face. She seemed well-near alive. And so is it with some I have here. You have all that heart could wish for, except the one thing necessary! You have all things save love to the Savior! You are not yet united to Him by a living faith. Ah, then, I grieve to say it, you are dead! You are dead! As much dead as the worst of men, although your death is not so apparent!

Again, I have in my presence young men who have grown to riper years than that fair damsel who died in her childhood. You have much about you that is lovely, but you have just begun to indulge in evil habits. You have not yet become the desperate sinner. You have not yet become altogether noxious in the eyes of other men. You are but beginning to sin. You are like the young man carried out on his bier. You have not yet become the confirmed drunk—you have not yet begun to curse and blaspheme God. You are still accepted in good society. You are not yet cast out. But you are dead, thoroughly dead, just as dead as the third and worst case! But I dare say I have some characters that are illustrations of that case, too. There is Lazarus in his tomb, rotten and putrid. And so there are some men not more dead than others but their death has become more apparent. Their character has become abominable, their deeds cry out against them! They are put out of decent society; the stone is rolled to the mouth of their tomb. Men feel that they cannot hold acquaintance with them, for they have so utterly abandoned every sense of right, that we say, “Put them out of sight, we cannot endure them!” Yet these putrid ones may live! These last are not more dead than the maiden upon her bed, though the death has more fully revealed itself in their corruption. Jesus Christ will quicken the one as well as the other and bring them all to know and love His name!

1. Now, then, I am about to enter into the details of the difference of these three cases. I will take the case of the young maiden. I have her here today. I have many illustrations of her present before me. At least, I

trust so. Now, will you allow me to point out all the differences? Here is the young maiden. Look upon her. You can bear the sight. She is dead but oh, *beauty lingers there*. She is fair and lovely though the life has departed from her. In the young man's case there is no beauty, the worm has begun to eat him, his honor has departed. In the third case, there is absolute rottenness. But here, there is beauty still upon her cheek! Is she not amiable? Is she not lovely? Would not all love her? Is she not to be admired, even to be imitated? Is she not fairest of the fair? Yes, that she is—but God the Spirit has not yet looked upon her. She has not yet bent her knees to Jesus and cried for mercy. She has everything except true religion. Alas for her, alas, that so fair a character should be a dead one! Alas, my sister, alas! That you—the benevolent, the kind one—should yet be, after all, dead in your trespasses and sins! As Jesus wept over that young man who had kept all the commandments and yet he lacked one thing, so I weep over you this morning! Alas, you fair one, lovely in your character and amiable in your carriage—why should you lie dead? For dead you are unless you have faith in Christ! Your excellence, your virtue and your goodness shall avail you nothing! You are dead and dead you must be, unless He makes you live!

Note, too, that in the case of this maiden whom we have introduced to you, the daughter of Jairus, *she is yet caressed*. She has only been dead a moment or two and the mother still presses her cheek with kisses. Oh, can she be *dead*? Do not the tears rain on her, as if they would sow the seeds of life in that dead earth again?—earth that looks fertile enough to bring forth life with but one living tear? Yes, but those salt tears are tears of barrenness. She lives not, but she is still caressed. Not so the young man. He is put on the bier. No man will touch him anymore, or else he will be utterly defiled. And as for Lazarus, he is shut up with a stone! But this young maiden is still caressed—so it is with many of you. You are loved even by the living in Zion. God's own people love you. The minister has often prayed for you. You are admitted into the assemblies of the saints, you sit with them as God's people, you hear as they hear and you sing as they sing. Alas for you! Alas for you, that you still are dead! Oh, it grieves me to the heart to think that some of you are all that heart could wish, except that *one thing*, yet lacking that which is the *only thing* that can deliver you! You are caressed by us, received by the living in Zion into their company and acquaintance, approved of and accepted. Alas, that you should yet be without life! Oh, in your case, if you are saved, you will have to join with even the worst in saying, "I have been quickened by divine grace, or else I had never lived."

And now will you look at this maiden, again? Note, *she has no grave clothes on her*. She is dressed in her own raiment—just as she retired to her bed a little sick—so lies she there. Not yet have the napkin and the shroud been wrapped about her. She still wears the clothes of sleep—she

is not yet given up to death. Not so the young man yonder—he is in his grave clothes. Not so Lazarus—he is bound hand and foot. But this young maiden has no grave clothes upon her. So with the young person we wish to speak, this morning. She has as yet, no evil habits. She has not yet reached that point. The young man yonder has begun to have evil habits. And yonder gray-headed sinner is bound hand and foot by them. But as yet *she* appears just like the living—she acts just like the Christian! Her habits are fair, goodly and comely. There seems to be little ill about her. Alas, alas, that you should be dead, even in your fairest raiment! Alas, you who have set the wreath of benevolence on your brow, you who do gird yourself with the white robes of outward purity—if you are not born-again—you are still dead! Your beauty shall fade away like a moth. And in the day of judgment you will be severed from the righteous, unless God shall make you live! Oh, I could weep over those young ones who seem, at present, to have been delivered from forming any habits which could lead them astray but who are yet unquickened and unsaved. Oh, would to God, young Man and young Woman, you might in early years be quickened by the Spirit!

And will you notice, yet once more, that this young maiden's death was *a death confined to her chamber*? Not so with the young man. He was carried to the gate of the city and many people saw him. Not so Lazarus. The Jews came to weep at his tomb. But this young woman's death is in her chamber. Yes, so it is with the young woman or the young man I mean to describe now. His sin is as yet a secret thing, kept to himself—as yet there has been no breaking forth of iniquity, but only the conception of it in the heart; just the embryo of lust, not as yet broken out into act. The young man has not yet drained the intoxicating cup although he has had some whisperings of the sweetness of it. He has not yet run into the ways of wickedness, though he has had temptations thrust upon him. As yet he has kept his sin in his chamber and most of it has been unseen. Alas, my brother! Alas, my friend, that you who in your outward carriage are so good, should yet have sins in the chamber of your heart and death in the secrecy of your being which is as true a death as that of the grossest sinner, though not so thoroughly manifested! Would to God that you could say, "And He has quickened me, for with all my loveliness and all my excellence, I was by nature dead in trespasses and sins." Come, let me just press this matter home. I have some in my congregation who I look upon with fear. Oh, my dear friends, my much-loved friends, how many there are among you! I repeat, they have all that the heart could wish except that one thing—they love not my Master! Oh, you young men who come up to the House of God and who are outwardly so good. Alas for you, that you should lack the root of the matter! Oh, you daughters of Zion, who are always at the house of prayer! Oh, that you should yet be without divine grace in your heart! Take heed, I be-

seech you, you fairest, youngest, most upright and most honest—when the dead are separated from the living, unless you are regenerated—you must go with the dead! Though you are ever so fair and goodly, you must be cast away unless you have been quickened by the Holy Spirit!

2. Thus, I have done with the first case. Now we will go to the young man, who stands second. He is not more dead than the other, but *he is further gone*. Come, now, and stop the bier. You cannot look upon him! Why, the cheek is sunken—there is a hollowness there, not as in the case of the maiden whose cheek was still round and ruddy. And the eyes—oh, what a blackness is there! Look on him, you can see that the gnawing of the worm will soon burst forth. Corruption has begun its work! So it is with some young men I have here. They are not what they were in their childhood, when their habits were proper and correct. But maybe they have just been enticed into the house of the strange woman. They have just been tempted to go astray from the path of rectitude. Their corruption is just breaking forth—they disdain, now, to sit at their mother's apron strings. They think it foul scorn to keep to the rules that bind the moral! They—they are *free!* They say they are and they will be free. They will live a jolly and a happy life. And so they run on in boisterous, yet wicked merriment and betray the marks of death about them! They have gone further than the maiden. She was still fair and comely, but here there is something that is the after-work of death. The maiden was caressed, but the young man is untouched—he lies on the bier and though men bear him on their shoulders, yet there is a shrinking from him. He is dead and it is *known* that he is dead! Young man, you have got as far as that—you know that good men shrink from you. It was but yesterday that your mother's tears fell fast and thick as she warned your younger brother to avoid your sin! Your very sister, when she kissed you but this morning, prayed to God that you might get good in this house of prayer. But you know that of late she has been ashamed of you. Your conversation has become so profane and wicked that even *she* can scarcely endure it. There are houses in which you were once welcome—where you once bowed your knees with them at the family prayer and your name was mentioned, too. But now you do not choose to go there, for when you go, you are treated with reserve—the good man of the house feels that he should not let his son go with you, for you would contaminate him! He does not sit down now side by side with you as he used to do and talk about the best things. He lets you sit in the room as a matter of mere courtesy. He stands far away from you, as it were. He feels that you have not a spirit congenial with his own. You are a little shunned. You are not quite avoided. You are still received among the people of God, yet there is a coldness that manifests that they understand that you are not a living one.

And note, too, that this young man, though carried out to his grave, was not like the maiden. She was in the garments of life but *he was wrapped in the grave clothes of death*. So many of you have begun to form habits that are evil; you know that already the screw of the devil is tightening on your finger! Once it was a screw you could slip off or on. You said you were master of your pleasures—now your pleasures are master of you! Your habits are not now commendable, you know they are not. You stand convicted while I speak to you this morning! You know your ways are evil. Ah, young man, though you have not yet gone so far as the open profligate and desperately profane, take heed—you are dead! You are dead! And unless the Spirit quickens you, you shall be cast into hell, to be the food of that worm which never dies but eats souls throughout eternity! And ah, young man, I weep, I weep over you! You are not yet so far gone that they have rolled the stone against you. You have not yet become obnoxious. You are not yet the staggering drunkard, nor yet the blasphemous infidel. You have much that is ill about you, but you have not gone all the way yet! Take heed! You will go still further—there is no stopping in sin. When the worm is there, you cannot put your finger on it and say, “Stop! Eat no more.” No, it will go on to your utter ruin! May God save you, now, before you shall come to that consummation for which hell so sighs and which heaven can alone avert!

One more remark concerning this young man. The maiden’s death was in her chamber. The *young man’s death was in the city gates*. In the first case I described, the sin was secret. But, young man your sin is not! You have gone so far that your habits are openly wicked. You have dared to sin in the face of God’s sun! You are not as some others—seemingly good—you go out and openly say, “I am no hypocrite. I dare to do wrong. I do not profess to be righteous. I know I am a rascal. I have gone astray and I am not ashamed to sin in the street.” Ah, young man, young man! Your father, perhaps, is now saying, “Would to God that I had died for him—would to God that I had seen him buried in his grave before he should have gone to such a length in wickedness! Would to God that when I first saw him and my eye was gladdened with my son, I had seen him the next minute smitten with disease and death! Oh, would to God that his infant spirit had been called to heaven, that he might not have lived to bring in this way my gray hairs in sorrow to the grave!” Your sport in the city gates is misery in your father’s house! Your open merriment before the world brings agony into a mother’s heart! Oh, I beseech you, stop! Oh, Lord Jesus, touch the bier this morning! Stop some young man in his evil habits, and say to him, “Arise!” Then will he join with us in confessing that those who are alive have been quickened by Jesus, through the Spirit, though they were dead in trespasses and sins!

3. Now we come to the third and last case—LAZARUS DEAD AND BURIED. Ah, dear friends, I cannot take you to see Lazarus in *his* grave.

Stand, oh stand away from him! Where shall we flee to avoid the noxious odor of that reeking corpse? Ah, where shall we flee? There is no beauty there. We dare not look upon it. There is not even the gloss of life left. Oh, hideous spectacle! I must not attempt to describe it—words would fail me—and you would be too much shocked. Nor dare I tell the character of some men here present—I would be ashamed to tell the things which some of you have done! This cheek might mantle with a blush to tell the deeds of darkness which some of the ungodly of this world habitually practice! Ah, the last stage of death, the last stage of corruption—oh, how hideous! But the last stage of SIN—hideous far more! Some writers seem to have an aptitude for playing in this mud and digging up this miry clay. I confess that I have none. I cannot describe to you the lust and vice of a full-grown sinner. I cannot tell you what are the debaucheries, the degrading lusts, the devilish, the bestial sins into which wicked men will run when spiritual death has had its perfect work in them and sin has manifested itself in all its fearful wickedness! I may have some here. They are not Christians. They are not, like the young maiden, still caressed—nor even, like the young man, still kept in the funeral procession. No, they have gone so far that decent people avoid them! Their very wife, when they go into the house, rushes upstairs to be out of the way. They are scorned. Such a one is the harlot from whom one's head is turned in the very street. Such a one is the openly profligate to whom we give wide quarters, lest we touch him. He is a man that is far gone. The stone is rolled before him. No one calls him respectable. He dwells, perhaps, in some back slum of a dirty lane—he knows not where to go! Even as he stands in this place, he feels that if his next door neighbor knew his guilt, he would give him a wide berth and stand far away from him, for he has come to the last stage. He has no marks of life—he is utterly rotten!

And mark—as in the case of the maiden, the sin was in the chamber, secret. In the next case it was in the open streets, public. But in this case it is secret again. It is in the tomb, for you will mark that men, when they are only half gone in wickedness do it openly—but when they are fully gone their lust becomes so degrading that they are obliged to do it in secret. They are put into the grave in order that all may be hidden. Their lust is one which can only be perpetrated at midnight, a deed which can only be done when shrouded by the astonished curtains of darkness. Have I any such here? I cannot tell that I have many. But still, I have some. Ah, in being constantly visited by penitents, I have sometimes blushed for this city of London! There are merchants whose names stand high and fair. Shall I tell it here? I know it on the best authority and true, too! There are some who have houses large and tall, who on the exchange are reputable and honorable and everyone admits them and receives them into their society—but ah, there are some of the merchants of Lon-

don who practice lusts that are abominable! I have in my church and congregation—and I dare to say what men dare to do—I have in my congregation women whose ruin and destruction have been worked by some of the most respected men in respectable society! Few would venture on so bold a statement as that! But if you boldly do the thing, I must speak of it! It is not for God's ambassador to wash his mouth beforehand—let him boldly reprove as men do boldly sin! Ah, there are some that are a stench in the nostrils of the Almighty—some whose character is hideous beyond all hideousness! They have to be covered up in the tomb of secrecy, for men would ban them from society and hiss them from existence if they knew all! And yet—and now comes a blessed interposition—yet this last case may be saved as well as the first and as easily, too! The rotten Lazarus may come out of his tomb as well as the slumbering maiden from her bed. The last—the most corrupt, the most desperately abominable—may yet be quickened and he may join in exclaiming, “And I have been quickened, though I was dead in trespasses and sins.” I trust you will understand what I wish to convey—that the death is the same in all cases, but the manifestation of it is different—and that the *life* must come from *God*, and from *God* alone!

II. And now I will go on to another point—THE QUICKENING. These three persons were all quickened and they were all quickened by the same being—that is by Jesus. But they were all quickened in a different manner. Note, first, the young maiden on her bed; when she was brought to life, it is said, “Jesus took her by the hand and said, maiden, arise.” It was a still small voice. Her heart received its pulse, again, and she lived! It was the gentle touching of the hand—no open demonstration—and the soft voice was heard—“arise.” Now, usually when God converts young people in the first stage of sin, before they have formed evil habits, He does it in a gentle manner. Not by the terrors of the law, the tempest, fire and smoke. He makes them like Lydia, “whose heart the Lord opened,” that she received the Word. On such, “it drops like the gentle dew from heaven upon the place beneath.” With hardened sinners divine grace comes down in showers that rattle on them. But in young converts it often comes gently. There is just the sweet breathing of the Spirit. They perhaps scarcely think it is a true conversion, but true it is, if they are brought to life.

Now note the next case. Christ did not do the same thing with the young man that he did with the daughter of Jairus. No. The first thing He did was He put His hand, not *on him*, mark you but *on the bier*. “And they that bore it stood still,” and after that, without touching the young man, He said in a louder voice, “Young man, I say unto you, Arise!” Note the difference—the young maiden's new life was given to her secretly. The young man's was given more publicly. It was done in the very street of the city. The maiden's life was given gently by a touch. But in the young

man's case it must be done, not by the touching of *him*, but by the touching of the *bier*. Christ takes away from the young man his means of pleasure. He commands his companions, who by bad example are bearing him on his bier to his grave, to stop. And then there is a partial reformation for a while and after that, there comes the strong out-spoken voice—"Young man, I say unto you, arise!"

But now comes the worst case. And will you please, at your leisure, at home notice what preparations Christ made for the last case of Lazarus? When He raised the maiden, He walked up into the chamber, smiling and said, "She is not dead, but sleeps." When He raised the young man, He said to the mother, "Weep not." Not so when He came to the last case. There was something more terrible about that—it was *a man corrupting in his grave*. It was on that occasion you read, "Jesus wept," and after He had wept, it is said that, "He groaned in His Spirit." And then He said, "Take away the stone." And then there came the *prayer*, "I know that You hear Me always." And then, will you notice, there came what is not expressed so fully in either of the other cases. It is written, "Jesus cried *with a loud voice*, Lazarus, come forth!" It is not written that He cried with a loud voice to either of the others. He spoke to them—it was His word that saved all of them. But in the case of Lazarus, He cried to him in a loud voice! Now, I have, perhaps, some of the last characters here—the worst of the worst. Ah, sinner, may the Lord quicken you! But it is a work that makes the Savior weep. I think when He comes to call some of you—from your death in sin—who have gone to the utmost extremity of guilt, He comes weeping and sighing for you. There is a stone to be rolled away—your bad and evil habits—and when that stone is taken away; a still small voice will not do for you. It must be the loud crashing voice, like the voice of the Lord which breaks the cedars of Lebanon—"Lazarus, come forth!" John Bunyan was one of those rotten ones. What strong means were used in his case! Terrible dreams, fearful convulsions, awful shakings to and fro—all had to be employed to make him live! And yet some of you think when God is terrifying you by the thunders of Sinai, that really He does not love you. It is not so—you were so dead that it needed a loud voice to arrest your ears!

III. This is an interesting subject—I wish I could dilate upon it but my voice fails me. And, therefore, permit me to go to the third point very briefly. THE LATER-EXPERIENCE OF THESE THREE PEOPLE WAS DIFFERENT—at least you gather it from the commands of Christ. As soon as the maiden was alive, Christ said, "Give her meat." As soon as the young man was alive, "He delivered him to his mother." As soon as Lazarus was alive, He said, "Loose him and let him go." I think there is something in this. When young people are converted who have not yet acquired evil habits—when they are saved before they become obnoxious in the eyes of the world—the command is, "*Give them meat.*" Young people need in-

struction; they need building up in the faith. They generally lack knowledge. They have not the deep experience of the older man or woman. They do not know as much about sin, nor even as much about salvation as the older man, that has been a guilty sinner. *They need to be fed.* So our business as ministers, when the young lambs are brought in, is to remember the injunction, "Feed My lambs." Take care of them, give them plenty of meat! Young people, search after an instructive minister! Seek after instructive books. Search the Scriptures, and seek to be instructed—that is your principal business! "Give her meat."

The next case was a different one. He gave the young man up to his mother. Ah, that is just what He will do with you, young man, if He makes you live. As sure as ever you are converted, He will give you up to your mother again. You were with her when you first, as a baby sat on her knee. And that is where you will have to go again. Oh, yes, divine grace knits together again the ties which sin has loosed. Let a young man become abandoned—he casts off the tender influence of a sister, and the kind associations of a mother—but if he is converted, one of the first things he will do will be to find the mother and the sister and he will find a charm in their society that he never knew before! You that have gone into sin, let this be your business, if God has saved you—*seek good company.* Just as Christ delivered the young man to his mother, so you seek after your mother, the church! Endeavor as much as possible to be found in the company of the righteous for as you were carried before to your grave by bad companions, you need to be led to heaven by good ones.

And then comes the case of Lazarus. "*Loose him and let him go.*" I do not know how it is that the young man ever was loosened. I have been looking through every book I have about the manners and customs of the East, and have not been able to get a clue to the difference between the young man and Lazarus. The young man, as soon as Christ spoke to him, "sat up and began to speak." But Lazarus, in his grave clothes, lying in the niche of the tomb, could do no more than just shuffle himself out from the hole that was cut in the wall. And then stand leaning against it. He could not speak. He was bound about in grave clothes. Why was it not so with the young man? I am inclined to think that the difference lay in the difference of their wealth. The young man was the son of a widow. Very likely he was only wrapped up in a few common things, and not so tightly bound about as Lazarus. Lazarus was of a rich family—very likely they wrapped him up with more care. Whether it was so or not, I do not know. What I need to hint at is this—when a man is far gone into sin, Christ does this for him—He breaks off his evil habits. Very likely the old sinner's experience will not be a feeding experience. It will not be the experience of walking with the saints. It will be as much as he can do to pull off his grave clothes—to get rid of his old habits. Perhaps to his death he will have to be taking off bit after bit of the grave

clothes in which he has been wrapped. There is his drunkenness. Oh what a fight will he have with that! There is his lust. What a combat he will have with that for many a year! There is his habit of swearing—how often will an oath come into his mouth and he will have as hard work as he can to thrust it down again! There is his pleasure-seeking—he has given it up—but how often will his companions be after him to get him to go with them? His life will be ever afterwards a loosening and letting go, for he will need it till he comes up to be with God forever and ever!

And now, dear friends, I must close by asking you this question—*have you been quickened?* And I must warn you that—good, bad, or indifferent—if you have never been quickened, you are dead in sins and must be cast away at the last! I must bid you, however, who have gone the furthest into sin, not to despair. Christ can quicken you as well as the best. Oh, that He would quicken you and lead you to believe! Oh, that He now would cry to some, “Lazarus, come forth!” and make some harlot virtuous, some drunk sober! Oh, that He would bless the word, especially to the young and amiable, and lovely, by making them now the heirs of God and the children of Christ!

And now but one thing I have to say to those who are quickened. And then adieu this morning and may God bless you! My dear friends, you who are quickened, let me advise you to be aware of the devil. He will be sure to be after you. Keep your mind always employed, and so you will escape him. Oh, be aware of his devices! Seek to “keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” The Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE USES OF THE LAW

NO. 128

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 19, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“What purpose then does the law serve?”
Galatians 3:19.

THE apostle, by a highly ingenious and powerful argument, had proved that the law was never intended by God for the justification and salvation of man. He declares that God made a covenant of grace with Abraham long before the law was given on Mount Sinai. He says that Abraham was not present at Mount Sinai and, therefore, there could have been no alteration of the covenant made there by his consent—that, moreover, Abraham’s consent was never asked as to any alteration of the covenant, without which consent the covenant could not have been lawfully changed. And besides that, the covenant stands fast and firm, seeing it was made to Abraham’s *seed*, as well as to Abraham himself. “This I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise—but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” Therefore, no inheritance and no salvation ever can be obtained by the law. Now, extremes are the error of ignorance. Generally, when men believe one truth, they carry it so far as to deny another. And very frequently, the assertion of a cardinal truth leads men to generalize on other particulars and so to make lies out of truth. The objection supposed may be worded thus—“You say, O Paul, that the law cannot justify. Surely then, the law is good for nothing at all—‘What purpose then does the law serve?’ If it will not save a man, what is the good of it? If, of itself, it will never take a man to heaven, why was it written? Is it not a useless thing?” The apostle might have replied to his opponent with a sneer—he might have said to him, “Oh, fool and slow of heart to understand! Is it proved that a thing is utterly useless because it is not intended for very purpose in the world? Will you say that because iron cannot be eaten, therefore, iron is not useful? And because gold cannot be the food of man, will you, therefore, cast gold away and call it worthless dross? Yet on your foolish supposition you *must* do so, for because I have said the law cannot save, you have foolishly asked me what is the use of it? And

you foolishly suppose God's law is good for nothing and can be of no value whatever." This objection is generally brought forward by two sorts of people. First, by mere cavilers who do not like the gospel and wish to pick all sorts of holes in it. They can tell us what they do *not* believe. But they do not tell us what they *do* believe. They would fight with everybody's doctrines and sentiments, but they would be at a loss if they were asked to sit down and write their own opinions. They do not seem to have got much further than the genius of the monkey which can pull everything to pieces but can put nothing together! Then, on the other hand, there is the Antinomian who says, "Yes, I know I am saved by grace alone." And then breaks the law—says it is not binding on him—even as a rule of life. He asks, "What purpose then does the law serve?" He throws it out of his door as an old piece of furniture only fit for the fire because it is not adapted to save his soul. Why, a thing may have many uses, if not a particular one. It is true that the law cannot save. And yet it is equally true that the law is one of the highest works of God and is deserving of all reverence and extremely useful when applied by God to the purposes for which it was intended!

Yet, pardon me my friends, if I just observe that this is a very natural question, too. If you read the doctrine of the apostle Paul you find him declaring that the law condemns all mankind. Now let us for one single moment take a bird's-eye view of the works of the law in this world. Lo, I see the law given upon Mount Sinai! The very hill does quake with fear. Lightning and thunder are the attendants of those dreadful syllables which make the hearts of Israel to melt! Sinai seems altogether on fire. The Lord came from Paran and the Holy One from Mount Sinai—"He came with ten thousand of His saints." Out of His mouth went a fiery law for them. It was a dread law even when it was given and since then from that Mount of Sinai an awful lava of vengeance has run down to deluge, to destroy, to burn and to consume the whole human race! If it had not been that Jesus Christ had stemmed its awful torrent and bid its waves of fire be still, we would have all been lost forever! If you could see the world without Christ in it, simply under the law, you would see a world in ruins, a world with God's black seal put upon it—stamped and sealed for condemnation! You would see men, who, if they knew their condition, would have their hands on their loins and be groaning all their days—you would see men and women condemned, lost and ruined. And in the uttermost regions you would see the pit of hell that is dug for the wicked into which the whole earth would have been cast if the law had its way, apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ our Redeemer! Yes, beloved, the law is a great deluge which would have drowned the world with worse than the water of Noah's flood. It is a great fire which would have burned

the earth with destruction worse than that which fell on Sodom! It is a stern angel with a sword, thirsty for blood and winged to slay. It is a great destroyer sweeping down the nations. It is the great messenger of God's vengeance sent into the world. Apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ, the law is nothing but the condemning voice of God thundering against mankind. "What purpose then does the law serve?" seems a very natural question. Can the law be of any benefit to man? Can that Judge who puts on a black cap and condemns us all—this Lord Chief Justice Law—can he help in salvation? Yes, he did! And you shall see how he does it, if God shall help us while we preach. "What purpose then does the law serve?"

I. The first use of the law is *to manifest to man his guilt*. When God intends to save a man, the first thing He does with him is to send the law to him to show him how guilty, how vile, how ruined he is and in how dangerous a position he is. You see that man lying there on the edge of the precipice? He is sound asleep and just on the perilous verge of the cliff. One single movement and he will roll over and be broken in pieces on the jagged rocks beneath and nothing more shall be heard of him. How is he to be saved? What shall be done for him—what shall be done? It is our position. We, too, are lying on the brink of ruin, but we are insensible to it. God, when He begins to save us from such an imminent danger, sends His law, which, with a stout kick, wakes us up and makes us open our eyes. We look down on our terrible danger, discover our miseries and then it is we are in a right position to cry out for salvation and our salvation comes to us! The law acts with man as the physician does when he takes the film from the eyes of the blind. Self-righteous men are blind men—though they think themselves good and excellent. The law takes that film away and lets them discover how vile they are and how utterly ruined and condemned if they are to abide under the sentence of the law.

Instead, however, of treating this doctrinally, I shall treat it practically and come home to each of your consciences. My hearer, does not the law of God convict you of sin this morning? Under the hand of God's Spirit, does it not make you feel that you have been guilty, that you deserve to be lost; that you have incurred the fierce anger of God? Look here, have you not broken these ten commandments? Even in the letter, have you not broken them? Who is there among you who has always honored his father and mother? Who is there among us who has always spoken the truth? Have we not sometimes borne false witness against our neighbor? Is there one person here who has not made unto himself another god and loved himself, or his business, or his friends, more than he has Jehovah, the God of the whole earth? Which of you has not coveted your neigh-

bor's house, or his manservant, or his ox, or his donkey? We are all guilty with regard to every letter of the law! We have, all of us, transgressed the commandments. And if we really understood these commandments and felt that they condemned us, they would have this useful influence on us of showing us our danger and so of leading us to flee to Christ! But, my hearers, does not this law condemn you because even if you should say you have not broken the letter of it, yet you have violated the spirit of it. Though you have never killed, yet we are told, he that is angry with his brother is a murderer! As a slave said once, "Sir, I thought me no kill—me innocent there. But when I heard that he that hates his brother is a murderer, then me cry guilty, for me have killed 20 men before breakfast very often, for I have been angry with many of them very often." This law does not only mean what it says in words, but it has deep things hidden in its heart. It says, "You shall not commit adultery," but it means, as Jesus has it, "He that looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." It says, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain," it means that we should reverence God in every place and have His fear before our eyes and should always pay respect unto His ordinances and evermore walk in His fear and love. Yes, my brethren, surely there is not one here so foolhardy in self-righteousness as to say, "I am innocent." The spirit of the law condemns us. And this is its useful property. It humbles us, makes us know we are guilty and so are we led to receive the Savior!

Mark this, moreover, my dear hearers, *one breach of this law is enough to condemn us forever*. He that breaks the law in one point is guilty of the whole! The law demands that we should obey every command and one of them broken, the whole of them are broken. It is like a vase of surpassing workmanship—in order to destroy it you need not shiver it to atoms—make but the smallest fracture in it and you have destroyed its perfection. As it is a perfect law which we are commanded to obey and to obey perfectly, make but one breach thereof and though we are ever so innocent we can hope for nothing from the law except the voice, "You are condemned, you are condemned, you are condemned!" Under this aspect of the matter, ought not the law to strip many of us of all our boasting? Who is there that shall rise in his place and say, "Lord, I thank You I am not as other men are"? Surely there cannot be one among you who can go home and say, "I have tithed mint and cummin. I have kept all the commandments from my youth"? No, if this law is brought home to the conscience and the heart, we shall stand with the publican, saying, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." The only reason why a man thinks he is righteous is because he does not know the law. You think you have never broken it because you do not understand it! There are some of you

who are most respectable people. You think you have been so good that you can go to heaven by your own works. You may not exactly say so, but you secretly think so! You have devoutly taken the sacrament, you have been mightily pious in attending your church or chapel regularly, you are good to the poor, generous and upright and you say, "I shall be saved by my works." No, sir, look to the flame that Moses saw and shrink and tremble and despair—the law can do nothing for us except condemn us—the utmost it can do is to whip us out of our boasted self-righteousness and drive us to Christ! It puts a burden on our backs and makes us ask Christ to take it off. It is like a lancet, it probes the wound. It is, to use a parable, as when some dark cellar has not been opened for years and is full of all kinds of loathsome creatures. We may walk through it not knowing they are there. But the law comes, opens the shutters, lets light in and then we discover what a vile heart we have and how unholy our lives have been. And, then, instead of boasting, we are made to fall on our faces and cry, "Lord, save or I perish. Oh, save me for Your mercy's sake, or else I shall be cast away!" Oh, you self-righteous ones now present who think yourselves so good that you can mount to heaven by your works—blind horses, perpetually going round the mill and making not one inch of progress—do you think to take the law upon your shoulders as Sampson did the gates of Gaza? Do you imagine that you can perfectly keep this law of God? Will you dare to say you have not broken it? No, surely, you will confess, though it is in but an under tone, "I have revolted." Then, know this—the law can do nothing for you in the matter of forgiveness. All it can do is just this—it can make you feel you are nothing at all. It can strip you. It can bruise you. It can kill you, but it can neither quicken, nor clothe, nor cleanse—it was never meant to do that! Oh, are you this morning, my hearer, sad because of sin? Do you feel that you have been guilty? Do you acknowledge your transgression? Do you confess your wandering? Hear me, then, as God's ambassador! God has mercy upon sinners! Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners! And though you have broken the law, He has kept it. Take His righteousness to be yours. Cast yourself upon Him. Come to Him now, stripped and naked and take His robe as your covering! Come to Him, black and filthy in sin, and wash yourself in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. And then you shall know, "what purposes then does the law serve?" That is the first point.

II. Now, the second. *The law serves to slay all hope of salvation by a reformed life.* Most men, when they discover themselves to be guilty, swear that they will reform. They say, "I have been guilty and have deserved God's wrath, but for the future I will seek to win a stock of merits which shall counterbalance all my old sins." In steps the law puts its

hand on the sinner's mouth and says, "Stop, you cannot do that, it is impossible!" I will show you how the law does this. It does it partly by reminding the man that *future obedience can be no atonement for past guilt*. To use a common metaphor so that the poor may thoroughly understand me—you have run up a score at your shop. Well, you cannot pay it. You go off to Mrs. Brown, your shopkeeper, and you say to her, "Well, I am sorry, ma'am, that through my husband being out of work, and all that, I know I shall never be able to pay you. It is a very great debt I owe you, but, if you please, ma'am, if you forgive me this debt I will never get into your debt any more. I will always pay for all I have." "Yes," she would say, "but that will not square our accounts. If you pay for all you have, it would be no more than you ought to do; but what about the old bills? How are they to be receipted? They won't be receipted by all your fresh payments." That is just what men do towards God. "True," they say, "I have gone far astray, I know, but then I won't do so any more." Ah, it is time you threw away such child's talk! You do but manifest your rampant folly by such a hope! Can you wipe away your transgression by future obedience? Ah, no, the old debt must be paid somehow—God's justice is inflexible and the law tells you all your requirements can make no atonement for the past! You must have atonement through Christ Jesus the Lord! "But," says the man, "I will try and be better and then I think I shall have mercy given to me." Then the law steps in and says, "You are going to try and keep me, are you? Why, man, you cannot do it!" *Perfect obedience in the future is impossible*. And the ten commandments are held up and if any awakened sinner will but look at them, he will turn away and say, "It is impossible for me to keep them." "Why, man, you say you will be obedient in the *future*? You have not been obedient in the past and there is no likelihood that you will keep God's commandments in time to come! You say you will avoid the evils of the past? You cannot—'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good that are accustomed to do evil?'" "But," you say "I will take greater heed to my ways." "Sir, you will not. The temptation that overcame you yesterday will overcome you tomorrow. But, mark this, even if you could, you could not win salvation by it."

The law tells you that unless you perfectly obey, you cannot be saved by your doings. It tells you that one sin will make a flaw in it all, that one transgression will spoil your whole obedience. It is a spotless garment that you must wear in heaven. It is only an unbroken law which God can accept! So, then, the law answers this purpose—to tell men that their acquirements, their talk and their doings—are of no use whatever in the matter of salvation! It is theirs to come to Christ, to get a new heart and

a right spirit—to get the evangelical repentance which needs not to be repented of—that so they may put their trust in Jesus and receive pardon through His blood! “What purpose then does the law serve?” It serves this purpose, as Luther has it—the purpose of a hammer. Luther, you know, is very strong on the subject of the law. He says, “For if any are not a murderer, an adulterer, a thief and outwardly refrain from sin, as the Pharisee did, which is mentioned in the gospel, he would swear that he is righteous and, therefore, he conceives an opinion of righteousness and presumes of his good works and merits. Such a one God cannot otherwise mollify and humble, that he may acknowledge his misery and damnation but by the law—for that is the hammer of death, the thundering of hell and the lightning of God’s wrath that beats to powder the obstinate and senseless hypocrites! For as long as the opinion of righteousness abides in man, so long there also abides in him incomprehensible pride, presumption, security, hatred of God, contempt of His grace, mercy, and ignorance of the promises and of Christ. The preaching of free remission of sins, through Christ cannot enter into the heart of such a one, neither can he feel any taste or savor thereof. For that mighty rock and adamant wall, to wit, the opinion of righteousness, wherewith the heart is environed, does resist it. Therefore the law is that hammer, that fire, that mighty strong wind and that terrible earthquake rending the mountains and breaking the rocks” (1 Kings 19:11, 12, 13). That is to say, the proud and obstinate hypocrites. Elijah, not being able to abide these terrors of the law, which by these things are signified, covered his face with his mantle. Notwithstanding, when the tempest ceased, of which he was a beholder, there came a soft and a gracious wind in the which the Lord was. But it behooved that the tempest of fire, of wind, and the earthquake should pass before the Lord should reveal Himself in that gracious wind.”

III. And now, a step further. You that know the grace of God can follow me in this next step. *The law is intended to show man the misery which will fall upon him through his sin.* I speak from experience, and many of you who hear me will hear this with ears of attention because you have felt the same. There was a time with me, when but young in years, I felt with much sorrow the evil of sin. My bones waxed old with roaring all day long. Day and night God’s hand was heavy upon me. There was a time when He seared me with visions and frightened me by dreams. By day I hungered for deliverance, for my soul fasted within me—I feared lest the very skies would fall upon me and crush my guilty soul. God’s law had got hold upon me and was showing me my misery. If I slept at night, I dreamed of the bottomless pit and when I awoke I seemed to feel the misery I had dreamed! Up to God’s house I went; my

song was but a groan. To my chamber I retired, and there with tears and groans, I offered up my prayer without a hope and without a refuge. I could then say with David, “The owl is my partner and the heron is my companion,” for God’s law was flogging me with its ten-thronged whip and then rubbing me with brine afterwards! I did shake and quiver with pain and anguish and my soul chose strangling rather than life, for I was exceedingly sorrowful. Some of you have felt the same. The law was sent on purpose to do that. But, you will ask, “Why that misery?” I answer that misery was sent for this reason—that I might then be made to cry to Jesus! Our heavenly Father does not usually make us seek Jesus till He has whipped us clean out of all our confidences! He cannot make us in earnest after heaven till He has made us feel something of the intolerable tortures of an aching conscience which is a foretaste of hell! Do you not remember, my hearer, when you used to awake in the morning and the first thing you took up was *Alleine’s Alarm*, or Baxter’s *Call to the Unconverted*? Oh, those books, those books in my childhood—I read and devoured them when under a sense of guilt. But they were like sitting at the foot of Sinai. When I turned to Baxter, I found him saying some such things as these—“sinner, do you know within an hour you may be in hell? Do you know you may soon be dying? Death is even now gnawing at your cheek. What will you do when you stand before the bar of God without a Savior? Will you tell Him you had no time to spend on religion? Will not that empty excuse melt into thin air? Oh, sinner, will you, then, dare to insult your Maker? Will you, then, dare to scoff at Him? Think! The flames of hell are hot and the wrath of God is heavy. Were your bones of steel and your ribs of brass, you might still quiver with fear. Oh, had you the strength of a giant, you could not wrestle with the Most High. What will you do when He shall tear you in pieces and there shall be none to deliver you? What will you do when He shall fire off His ten great guns at you? The first commandment shall say, ‘Crush him! He has broken me!’ The second shall say, ‘Damn him! He has broken me!’ The third shall say, ‘A curse upon him! He has broken me!’ And so shall they all fly upon you—and you without a shelter, without a place to flee to and without a hope.” Ah, you have not forgotten the days when no hymn seemed suitable to you but the one that began—

***“Stoop down my soul that used to rise
Converse awhile with death!
Think how a gasping mortal lies,
And pants away his breath!”***

Or else—

***“That awful day shall surely come,
The appointed hour makes haste,
When I must stand before my Judge,***

And pass the solemn test.”

Yes, that was why the law was sent—to convict us of sin—to make us shake and shiver before God! Oh, you that are self-righteous, let me speak to you this morning with just a word or two of terrible and burning earnestness. Remember, sirs, the day is coming when a crowd more vast than this shall be assembled on the plains of earth. When on a great white throne the Savior, Judge of men, shall sit. Now He is come. The book is opened. The glory of heaven is displayed, rich with triumphant love, and burning with unquenchable vengeance! Ten thousand angels are on either hand. And you are standing to be tried. Now, self-righteous man, tell me *now* that you went to church three times a day! Come, man, tell me *now* that you kept all the commandments! Tell me now that you are not guilty! Come before Him with a receipt of your mint, and your anise, and your cummin! Come along with you! Where are you? Oh, you are fleeing! You are crying, “Rocks hide me! Mountains fall on me!” Where are you going, man? Why, you were so fair on earth that none dare spoke to you! You were so good and so comely—why do you run away? Come, man, pluck up your courage! Come before your Maker—tell Him that you were honest, sober, excellent, and that you deserve to be saved! Why do you delay to repeat your boasts? Out with it—come—say it! No, you will not. I see you still fleeing, with shrieks, away from your Maker’s presence. There will be none found to stand before Him, then, in their own righteousness. But look! Look! Look! I see a man coming forward out of that motley throng. He marches forward with a steady step, and with a smiling eye. What? Is there any man found who shall dare to approach the dread tribunal of God? What? Is there one who dares to stand before his Maker? Yes, there is one—he comes forward and he cries, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Do you not shudder? Will not the mountains of wrath swallow him? Will not God launch that dreadful thunderbolt against him? No—listen while he confidently proceeds—“Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died. Yes, rather, that has risen again.” And I see the right hand of God outstretched—“Come, you blessed, enter the kingdom prepared for you.” Now is fulfilled the verse which you once sweetly sang—

***“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who anything to my charge shall lay?
While, through Your blood, absolved I am
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”***

IV. And now, my dear friends, I am afraid of wearying you. Therefore, let me briefly hint at one other thought. “What purpose then does the law serve?” *It was sent into the world to show the value of a Savior.* Just as foils set off jewels and as dark spots make bright tints brighter, so does the law make Christ appear the fairer and more heavenly! I hear the law

of God curse and how harsh its voice. Jesus says, "Come unto Me." Oh, what music! All the more musical after the discord of the law! I see the law condemns; I behold Christ obeying it; oh, how ponderous that price—when I know how weighty the demand was! I read the commandments and I find them strict and awfully severe—oh, how holy must Christ have been to obey all these for me! Nothing makes me value my Savior more than seeing the law condemn me! When I know this law stands in my way and like a flaming cherubim will not let me enter Paradise, then I can know how sweetly precious must Jesus Christ's righteousness be—which is my passport to heaven and gives me grace to enter there!

V. And, lastly, "What purpose then does the law serve?" *It was sent into the world to keep Christians from self-righteousness.* Christians—do they ever get self-righteous? Yes, they do. The best Christian in the world will find it hard work to keep himself from boasting and from being self-righteous. John Knox, on his deathbed, was attacked with self-righteousness. The last night of his life on earth he slept some hours during which he uttered many deep and heavy moans. Being asked why he moaned so deeply, he replied, "I have during my life sustained many assaults of Satan. But at present he has assaulted me most fearfully and put forth all his strength to make an end of me at once. The cunning serpent has labored to persuade me that I have *merited* heaven and eternal blessedness by the faithful discharge of *my* ministry. But blessed be God who has enabled me to quench this fiery dart by suggesting to me such passages as these—"What have you that you have not received?" And, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Yes, and each of us have felt the same. I have often felt myself rather amused at some of my brothers and sisters who have come to me and said, "I trust the Lord will keep you humble," when they, themselves, were not only as proud as they were high, but a few inches over! They have been most sincere in prayer that I should be humble, unwittingly nursing their own pride by their own imaginary reputation for humility! I have long since given up entreating people to be humble because it naturally tends to make them proud. A man is apt to say, "Dear me, these people are afraid I shall be proud. I must have something to be proud of." Then we say to ourselves, "I will not let them see it." And we try to keep our pride down but after all we are as proud as Lucifer within! I find that the most proud and most self-righteous people are those who do nothing at all and have no shadow of presence for any opinion of their own goodness. The old truth in the book of Job is still true. You know in the beginning of the book of Job it is said, "The oxen were plowing and the asses were feeding beside them." That is generally the way in this world. The oxen are plowing in the

church—we have some who are laboring hard for Christ—and the asses are feeding beside them on the finest livings and the fattest of the land! These are the people who have so much to say about self-righteousness! What do they do? They do not do enough to earn a living and yet they think they are going to *earn heaven*. They sit down and fold their hands and yet they are so reverently righteous because they sometimes dole out a little in charity. They do nothing and yet boast of self-righteousness! And with Christian people it is the same. If God makes you laborious and keeps you constantly engaged in His service, you are less likely to be proud of your self-righteousness than you are if you do nothing! But at all times there is a natural tendency to it. Therefore, God has written the law that when we read it, we may see our faults—that when we look into it, as into a mirror—we may see the impurities in our flesh and have reason to abhor ourselves in sackcloth and ashes and still cry to Jesus for mercy! Use the law in this fashion and in no other.

And now, says one, “Sir, are there any here that you have been preaching at?” Yes, I like to preach *at* people. I do not believe it is of any use to preach *to* people—preach right *into* them and right *at* them. I find in every circle a class who say, in plain English, “Well, I am as good a father as is to be found in the parish. I am a good tradesman. I pay twenty shillings in the pound. I am no Sir John Dean Paul. I go to church, or I go to chapel—and that is more than everybody does. I pay my subscriptions—I subscribe to the infirmary. I say my prayers. Therefore I believe I stand as good a chance of heaven as anybody in the world.” I do believe that three out of four of the people of London think something of that sort. Now, if that is the ground of your trust, you have a rotten hope! You have a plank to stand upon that will not bear your weight in the day of God’s account! As the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, “Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” And if you think the best performance of your hands can save you—know this—that “Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.” Those who sought not after it have attained it! Why? Because the one has sought it by faith, the other has sought it by the deeds of the law—where justification never was to be found. Hear, now, the gospel, men and women—down with that boasting form of your righteousness—away with your hopes, with all your trusts that spring from this—

**“Could your tears forever flow,
 Could your zeal no respite know!
 All for sin could not atone
 Christ must save, and save alone!”**

If you would know how we must be saved, hear this—you must come with nothing of your own to Christ. Christ has kept the law. You are to have His righteousness to be your righteousness! Christ has suffered in the place of all who repent. His punishment is to stand instead of your being punished! And through faith in the sanctification and atonement of Christ you are to be saved! Come, then, you weary and heavy laden, bruised and mangled by the fall. Come then, you sinners; come then, you moralists; come then, all you that have broken God's law, and feel it—leave your own trusts and come to Jesus—He will take you in, give you a spotless robe of righteousness, and make you His forever! “But how can I come?” asks one. “Must I go home and pray?” No, sir, no! Where you are standing now, you may come to the cross. Oh, if you know yourself to be a sinner, now—I beseech you, before your feet shall leave the floor on which you stand—now, say this—

***“Myself into Your arms I cast—
Lord, save my guilty soul at last.”***

Now, down with you, away with your self-righteousness! Look at me—look, now. Say not, “Must I mount to heaven, and bring Christ down?” “The word is near you, on your mouth, and in your heart. If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe with your heart, you shall be saved.” Yes, you—*you*—YOU! Oh, bless God, we have heard of hundreds who have in this place believed on Christ! Some of the blackest of the human race have come to me but even lately, and told me what God has done for them! Oh, that you, too, would now come to Jesus! Remember, he that believes shall be saved, be his sins ever so many; and he that believes not, must perish, be his sins ever so few! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would lead you to believe—so should you escape the wrath to come, and have a place in paradise among the redeemed!

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DAVID'S DYING PRAYER

NO. 129

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 26, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.”
Psalm 72:19.

THERE was a time when this prayer would have been unnecessary. A period, in fact, when it could not have been offered, seeing the thing to be asked for was already in being. A time there was when the word, *rebellion*, had not been uttered against the great magistracy of heaven. There was a day when the slime of sin had never been left by the trail of the serpent, for no serpent then existed and no evil spirit. There was an hour, never to be forgotten, when the seraph might have flapped his wings forever and never have found anything of discord, or anything of rebellion or of anarchy throughout God's universe! There was a day when the mighty angels assembled in the halls of the Most High and without exception did reverence to their liege Lord and paid Him homage due. When the vast creation revolved around its center, the great metropolis—the throne of God—and paid its daily and hourly homage unto Him. When the harmonies of creation always came to one spot and found their focus near the throne of God. There was a time when every star was bright. When all space was filled with loveliness, when holiness, purity and happiness were like a robe which mantled the entire creation. This world, itself, was once fair and lovely—so fair and lovely that we who live in these erring times can scarcely guess its beauty! It was the house of song and the dwelling place of praise. If it had no pre-eminence among its sister spheres—certainly it was inferior to none of them. Surrounded with beauty, girt with gladness and having in it holy and heavenly inhabitants, it was a house to which the angels themselves loved to resort—where the holy spirits, the morning stars, delighted to sing together over this beautiful and fair earth of ours! But now how changed! How different! Now it is our duty to devoutly bend our knees and pray that the whole earth may yet be filled with His glory.

In one sense this prayer is still unnecessary, for in a certain sense the whole earth is filled with God's glory. “All your works praise You, O God,” is as true, now, as it was in paradise! The stars still sing their Maker's praise—no sin has stopped their voices, no discord has made a jarring note among the harmonies of the spheres. The earth, itself, still praises

its Maker. The exhalations, as they arise with morning, are still a pure offering, acceptable to their Maker. The lowing of the cattle, the singing of the birds, the leaping of the fishes and the delights of animal creations are still acceptable as votive offerings to the Most High! The mountains still bring righteousness. On their hoary summits God's holy feet might tread, for they are yet pure and spotless. Still do the green valleys, laughing with their verdure send up their shouts to the Most High. The praise of God is sung by every wind. It is howled forth in dread majesty by the voice of the tempest, the winds resound it and the waves, with their thousand hands, clap, keeping chorus in the great march of God! The whole earth is still a great orchestra for God's praise and His creatures still take up various parts in the eternal song, which, ever swelling and ever increasing, shall, by-and-by, mount to its climax in the consummation of all things. In that sense, therefore, the prayer is still inappropriate. God, who fills all-in-all and fills earth and heaven needs not to have more glory, as to the essence of His glory—for He is still glorified in the whole earth!

But David intended this prayer in another sense. "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen." Not as Creator but as a moral Governor and Ruler. It is as Governor that we have revolted from God, and done dishonor to Him. It is as our Master, our Ruler, our Judge that we have done despite to His glory and have trampled on His crown. It is, therefore, in this respect that David wished that the whole earth might be filled with God's glory. He desired that every idol temple might be cast down—that the name of Jehovah might be sung by every lip. That He in His person might be loved by every heart and be forever adored as "God over all, blessed forever." A foolish wish, you say, for it never can be accomplished. Surely the day will never come when hoary systems of superstition shall die. What? Shall colossal systems of infidelity and of idolatry totter to their fall? They have resisted the battering ram for many a year—and yet shall they pass away and shall God's kingdom come and His will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven? No, it is no day dream of a boy; it is no wish of the enthusiast! Mark who uttered that prayer and where he was when he uttered it! It was the prayer of a dying king. It was the prayer of a holy man of God whose eyes were just then lighted up with brightness in view of the celestial city, as he stood on the mighty Pisgah, "and viewed the landscape over." It was the prayer of the dying psalmist, when on the margin of his life he surveyed the ocean—the prayer of a mighty king when he saw the scroll of prophecy unfolded before him for the last time and was about to be ushered into the presence of his Maker! He uttered this as his last best wish and desire. And when he had uttered it, he sank back in his bed and said, "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse are ended." It was his last prayer—"Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen."

First, this morning, I shall try to *explain the prayer*; then I shall labor as God shall enable me *to inflame the hearts of all Christians to desire the objective of this prayer*; then I will offer *a word or two of counsel as to the pursuit of the objective here spoken of*; and I will conclude by noticing the promise to buoy our hopes up. By-and-by “the earth shall be filled with His glory.”

I. First, then, let me EXPLAIN THE PRAYER. It is a large prayer—a massive one. A prayer for a city needs a stretch of faith. Yes, there are times when a prayer for one man is enough to stagger our belief, for we can scarcely think that God will hear us for even that one! But how great this prayer is, how comprehensive! “Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.” It does not exempt one single country, however trod under the foot of superstition! It does not leave out one single nation, however abandoned, for the cannibal as well as for the civilized, for the man who grasps the tomahawk as well as for the man who bends his knee in supplication—this prayer is uttered, “Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.”

Let me just very briefly note what I believe the psalmist meant. *He desired that the true religion of God might be sent into every country.* Looking from that point of view, as we utter this prayer, what a multitude of thoughts rush into our minds! Lo, yonder we see the hoary systems of ancient superstition! We behold multitudes bowing down before Buddha and Brahma and paying their adorations to idols that are not gods—we pray for them—that they may cease to be idolaters and that God’s name may be known among them! Yonder we see the crescent, gleaming with a pale and sickly light and we pray that the followers of Mohammed may bow themselves before the cross, renounce the scimitar, and return to Him who loved them, casting away all the uncleanness and filthiness of their former religion. We see yonder the scarlet woman on the seven hills and we include her in our prayer. We pray that God may cast down Rome; that He may overturn her deep, hell-rooted foundations, and may cause her tyranny over the nations to cease; that she may no more be drunk with the blood of the slain, and no more with her idolatries and witchcrafts lead the nations astray. We include her in our supplications. We look on nations that are almost too debased to be included in the roll of mankind. We see the Afrikan in his kraal, the Bushman and the Bechuana and we put up our prayer for these—“Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.” Let Africa’s center, once thought to be barren but now discovered to be glorious in fertility become fertile, also, in works of grace. Let the regions from where our black brethren have been driven to slavery become the homes of blessedness and the regions of God’s praise. We cast our eye to other regions where the scalp is still at the Indian’s belt, where still they wash their hands in blood and delight themselves in murder. We look to that huge empire of China and

we see the myriads still lost in infidelity and a partial idolatry which is consuming them and destroying them and we pray, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen." Yes, it is a great prayer, but we mean it. We are praying against Juggernaut, and against Buddha, and against every form and fashion of false religion. We are crying against anti-Christ, and we are praying that the day may come when every temple shall be dismantled, when every shrine shall be left poor as poverty, and when there shall be no temple but the temple of the Lord God of Hosts, and no song shall be sung but the song of Hallelujah unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood!

But we mean more than this. We ask not merely the nominal Christianity of any country but *the conversion of every family in every country*. "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen." Is that wish too great, too high? Are we too optimistic in our expectations? No! "The knowledge of the Lord" is to "cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea" and that is entirely! We do not wish to see dry places here and there, but as the deep foundations of the depths are covered with the sea, so we wish that every nation may be covered with God's truth. And so we pray that every family may receive it. Yes, we pray that every household may have its morning and its evening prayer. We pray that every family may be brought up in the fear of the Lord that every child may, on its mother's knees, say, "Our Father," and that the answer may come to the infant's prayer, "Your kingdom come." Yes, we ask of God that every house may be like the tents of Judah, consecrated to God. We ask that even the kraal of the Afrikaan may become a synagogue for God's praise. Our desire is that man may become so holy that every meal may become a eucharist and every cup a chalice, and every garment a priestly vestment, and that all their labors may be consecrated to the Lord! We are bound to expect it, for it is said, "Even the bells upon the horses shall be holiness to the Lord, and even the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar."

But we go further than that. We do not ask merely for household conversion but for *the individual salvation of every existing being*. "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen." Should there be one heart that does not beat in God's praise, or one lip that is dumb in the melody of thanksgiving, then there would be yet a spot left which would not be filled with God's praise and that one left unconverted would blot and blur the whole great work of filling the earth with God's glory. A missionary once said and said truly that if all the people in the world were converted except one man in Siberia, it would be worth while for all the Christians in England to make a pilgrimage to Siberia, if that man's salvation could not be accomplished in any other way. And so it would! The salvation of one soul is unutterably precious and when we offer this prayer, we exclude none. We pray that the atheist, the blasphemer, the

hardened rebel, the profligate may each be filled with God's glory. And then we ask for mercy for the whole earth. We leave not out so much as one but so hope and expect the day when all mankind shall bow at the Savior's feet! When every hand shall bring tribute, every lip a song and every eye shall speak its gladness and its praise! This I believe to be the psalmist's prayer—that every man, woman and child might be converted and that, in fact, in every heart and conscience God might reign without a rival, Lord paramount over the great wide world!

II. Well, now, I am going, in the second place, to try to STIR YOU UP, my brothers and sisters, to desire this great, this wonderful thing for which David prayed! Oh, for the rough and burning eloquence of the hermit of old who stirred the nations of Europe to battle for the cross! I would to God this morning I could speak as he did when the multitude were gathered together. Or, like that bishop of the church who followed him who addressed the mighty multitudes with such burning words of fiery eloquence that at last they heaved to and fro with waves of excitement and every man, starting to his feet and grasping his sword cried, "*Deus vult*," "The Lord wills it" and rushed forward to battle and to victory! In a higher and holier sense I preach the crusade today, not as a hermit but as God's preacher. I come forth to stir you up, men and brethren, to desire and seek after this great and highest wish of the faithful—that the whole earth might be filled with His glory! And how shall I stir you up except by leading you to one or two contemplations?

First, I beseech you, *contemplate the majesty of God*. Or rather, since I am unable to help you to do that just now, let me remind you of seasons when you have, in some measure, grasped the thought of His divinity. Have you ever at night gazed upon the starry orbs with the thought that God was the Maker of them all until your soul was steeped in reverent adoration? And have you then bowed your head with wonder and with praise and said, "Great God! How infinite You are"? Have you ever, in looking upon God's pure earth, when you have seen the mountains, and the clouds, and the rivers and the floods, said—

***"These are Your glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Yours this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair—Yourself how wondrous then?"***

Oh, I think you must have had some glowing bursts of devotion, somewhat like that burst of Coleridge in his hymn from the valley of Chamounix or like that of Thompson, when he led the Seasons out to sing God's praise! Or like that matchless burst of Milton, when he extolled God, making Adam in the garden praise his Maker! Yes, there have been moments when we could bow before God, when we felt our own nothingness and knew that He was all-in-all. Ah, if you can get such thoughts as these, my friends, this morning, I know that the next thought akin to this will be—"Let the whole earth be filled with His glory.

Amen and Amen.” You cannot bow before God, yourself, and adore Him without wishing that all the rest of mankind should do the same! Ah and the thought has gone further. You have wished that even inanimate objects might praise Him! Oh, you mountains, let the shaggy woods upon your crowns wave in adoration! You that with bald heads lift up yourselves loftier than those minor hills, let the clouds that gird you serve like wings of cherubim to veil your faces! But oh, adore Him, adore Him, for He is worthy of all adoration! Let Him always be extolled! You cannot, I repeat, have great thoughts of God, yourselves, without spontaneously rising up and saying, “Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.”

But, my brothers and sisters turn your eyes yonder. What do you see there? You see the Son of God stepping from the place of His glory, casting aside the garments of His majesty, and robing Himself in garments of clay! Do you see Him yonder? He is nailed to a cross! Oh, can you behold it, as His head hangs meekly on His breast? Can you catch the accents of His lips when He says, “Father, forgive them”? Do you see Him with the crown of thorns still about His brow, with bleeding head and hands and feet? And does not your soul burst with adoration when you see Him giving Himself for your sins? What? Can you look upon this miracle of miracles, the death of the Son of God, without feeling reverence stirred within your bosom—a marvelous adoration that language can never express? No, I am sure you cannot. You see your Savior—you close your eyes that are already filled with tears and as you bend your head upon the mount of Calvary I hear you say, “Jesus, have mercy upon me.” And when you feel the blood applied to your conscience and know that He has blotted out your sins, you are not a man unless you start from your knees and cry, “Let the whole earth be filled with His glory, Amen and Amen.” What? Did He bend His awful head down to the shades of death? What? Did He hang upon the cross and bleed and shall not earth praise Him? O you dumb, surely this might loosen your tongues! O you silent ones, you might begin to speak! And if you do not, surely the very stones will speak and the rocks that once split at His death will again open a wide mouth to let their hallelujahs ascend to heaven! Ah, the cross makes us praise Him. Lovers of Jesus, can you love Him without desiring that His kingdom may come? What? Can you bow before Him and yet not wish to see your Monarch master of the world? Out with you, if you can pretend to love your Master and yet not desire to see Him the conqueror! I give you not a joy for your piety unless it leads you to wish that the same mercy which has been extended to you might reach to others and unless it prompts you to pray this prayer, “Let the whole earth be filled with His glory, Amen and Amen.”

But gaze a moment longer. The man that died for sinners sleeps within a grave. A little while He sleeps until the angel rolls away the stone,

and gives Him liberty. Do you behold Him as He wakes up from His slumber, and radiant with majesty, and glorious with light frightens His guards, and stands a risen man? Do you see Him as He climbs to heaven, as He ascends to the paradise of God, sitting at the right hand of His Father till His enemies are made His footstool? Do you see Him as principalities and powers bow before Him, as cherubim and seraphim cast their crowns at His feet? Do you hear Him? Do you hear Him intercede and do you also hear the music of the glorified spirits ever chanting perpetual praises before His throne? And do you not wish that we might—

***“Prepare new honors for His name,
And songs before unknown?”***

Oh, it is impossible to see the glorified Christ with the eyes of faith, without exclaiming afterwards, “Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.”

But now one other thought. *Common humanity urges us to pray this prayer.* Did you ever walk through a village full of drunkenness and profanity? Did you ever see at every ale-house poor wretched bloated carcasses that once were men standing or rather leaning against the posts staggering with drunkenness? Have you ever looked into the houses of the people and beheld them as dens of iniquity at which your soul did turn aghast? Have you ever walked through that village and seen the poverty and degradation and misery of the inhabitants and sighed over it? Yes, you have. But was it ever your privilege to walk through that village in later years, when the gospel has been preached there? It has been mine. Once it was my delight to labor in a village where sin and iniquity had once been rampant and I can say with joy and happiness that almost from one end of the village to the other, at the hour of eventide, you would have heard the voice of song coming from every rooftop, echoing from every heart. Oh, what a pleasant thing to walk through the village when drunkenness has almost ceased, when debauchery is dead and when men and women go forth to labor with joyful hearts, singing as they go the praises of the ever-living God and when, at sunset, the humble cottager calls his children together and reads them some portion from the book of truth and then together they bend their knees—oh, happy, happy households! Yes, we have seen some such places and when our hearts have been gladdened by the sight, we have said, “Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.” It has sometimes been our delight to tabernacle among the lowly for a little season. We have had our seat given us in the chimney corner for a while, and by-and-by, as the time to retire drew near, the good man of the house has said to the prophet's servant, “Now, sir, will you read for us tonight, as you are here?” And we have noticed the faces of the little group around us, as we have read some portion like this—“Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.” And then we have said, “No, we will not

pray tonight, you must be priest in your own house and pray yourself." And then the good man has prayed for his children, and when we have seen them rise up and kiss their parent for the night, we have thought, "Well, if this is the kind of family that religion makes, let the whole earth be filled with His glory! For the blessedness and for the happiness of man, let God's kingdom come and let His will be done." Contrast that, my brothers and sisters, with the murderous rites of the Hindu. Contrast it with the savagery and barbarism of heathen lands! If I could bring some barbarian to stand before you, this morning, he might himself be a better preacher than I can be. With his almost unintelligible utterances and clicks he would begin to tell you the few ideas he had, which ideas began and ended with himself, and with the miserable prey on which he lived. You would say, "What? There is such a miserable race as this?" Let us at once kneel down and utter this prayer, and then rise up and labor to fulfill it—"Let the whole earth be filled with His glory." I feel that I cannot stir you this morning as I wished. (If I were a Welshman I think I could move your hearts—they have such a knack of waking persons up by what they say). Oh, my soul longs for that day, it sighs for that blessed period! Would God that all sighed and longed for it too, and were prepared to work and labor, watch and pray, until we should indeed sing with truth—

***"Hallelujah! Christ the Lord
God omnipotent shall reign!
Hallelujah! Christ in God,
God in Christ is all-in-all!"***

May such a day come, as it certainly will!

III. And now, I am to give you A FEW COUNSELS IN THE PURSUIT OF THIS OBJECTIVE.

First, *you cannot pray this prayer unless you seek in your own life to remove every impediment to the spread of Christ's kingdom.* You cannot pray it, sir, you cannot say, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen"—you who yesterday cursed God! How can the same lips that cursed God say, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen"? You cannot say it, sir—you who break His commandments and violate His laws and run riot against His government. If you said it, you would be a vile hypocrite! Is there anything in our character and conduct which has a tendency to prevent the spread of the gospel? Oh, we say it with pain! There are many members of the churches everywhere whose characters are such that if they remain what they are, Christ's gospel can never fill the whole earth, for it cannot fill *their* hearts! You know the men. They call themselves God's dear people and they would be dear if they were given away—certainly nobody would buy them at the lowest price in the world. They say that they are His precious ones and they must be very precious, or else He never would have any

thoughts of mercy towards such a set as they are. And they will sometimes say, "Ah, we are the Lord's elect," and they live in sin! They say there are very few of their sort and we reply, "What a mercy!" If there were, we would need many of our public buildings to be turned at once into jails to lock up such people! No, we do not believe in the characters of men who make a profession of religion and yet do not live up to it. Do not tell us about such profession—just be quiet altogether! Do not call yourselves religious and yet act as others do. I prefer a man that is a right down blustering sinner when he is at it! Do not let him go into sin and then mask and cover it all up. There is no use in it. The man is not honest. I think there is some hope for a man who is a down-right thoroughbred sinner that goes at it and is not ashamed of it. But a rascally, canting hypocrite that comes crawling into our church and yet lives in sin all the while! Such a man—God Almighty may save him—but it is very seldom that He does save such people. He lets them go on and reap the fruit of their own ways. He lets them find out; after all, that hypocrisy is a sure road to hell, and never can lead to heaven! We must look well to ourselves, by God's Spirit, or else we must not pray this prayer—"Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen."

And there is my friend, Mr. Save-All. I am sure he cannot pray this prayer, but at least I think I hear him in his soul say, "O Lord, let the whole earth be filled with Your glory." A contribution is requested to assist the cause in so doing. Oh, no, not at all. Like the old slave woman we have all heard of, who sang, "Fly abroad, you mighty gospel," and put her eyes up in such a devout frame that her brother slave, who was passing the plate that day, could not get her to pay any attention to him till he jogged her elbow and said, "Yes, Sissy, it is well enough to sing, 'Fly abroad, you mighty gospel,' if you would give it wings—then it might—but you are just singing this and doing nothing at all." Now, what is the good of a man singing, "Fly abroad, you mighty gospel," and praying this prayer, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory" if he has got six thousand a year coming in for doing nothing at all? It is no use for a man to put on a pair of lawn sleeves and say, "Oh, it is my devout desire that the whole earth may be filled with His glory" and then leaves the world to stare at him and consider what good he is! It is no use for a man simply to have a curacy or something of that sort, buy his manuscripts cheap, come up and read off two sermons twenty minutes long, go home with a good conscience that he has done his duty twice and then say, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory." Why, my friends, there is no chance of it if that is the way it is to be done—not the slightest in the world—to cry, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory," and then stand still and do nothing at all! Or even merely to do some nominal well-paid work and feel it is all over. We need something in the ministry a little different before even ministers can pray this prayer in sincerity! I am not finding

fault with any of my brothers, but I would recommend them to preach 13 times a week and then they can pray this prayer a little better! Three times a week would not do for me. It would hurt my constitution—preaching 13 times a week is good healthy exercise! But you shut yourself up in your study, or what is 10 times worse, you do nothing at all but just take it easy all the week till Sunday comes and then borrow a sermon out of an old magazine, or buy one of the helps for ministers, or take down one of Charles Simeon's skeletons and preach it! My good man, you cannot pray in that fashion! The poorest Sunday school teacher has a better right to pray that prayer than you have! You go to a fire that is raging vehemently and say, "Oh, let it be put out!" and stand with your hands in your pockets while a little boy that is standing there and passing the bucket may pray that prayer sincerely, but you cannot! No, my brothers, you must be up and doing for your Master, or else you cannot pray this prayer. You say, "I am doing my duty." But my friend, that is not much use—you must do a little more than that. Doing your duty, as you think, is often doing but a very small part of your duty. What is a man's duty? "Why, as much as he is paid for, sir." Oh, no, I think not! A man's duty is to do whatever his hand finds to do with all his might. And until he does that, he cannot with any sincerity offer this prayer, "Let the whole world be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen." Ah, there are some here that I could mention, who by their unparalleled philanthropy, by their unique and unrivalled love of their fellow creatures have done much to fill the earth with God's glory. They have let the world see what Christian men and Christian women are able to do when God's love has touched their hearts! There are to be found some who by devoting themselves to the service of their Master and spending and being spent for Him, have done much to heighten the opinion of the world towards Christianity and make them think better of the Christian church than they would have done if it had not been for these few rare, mighty heroes in the midst of us! "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen." But it cannot be, speaking after the manner of men, unless we, each of us, labor and endeavor as God shall help us, to extend the kingdom of our Master.

And now, my friends, have I been urging you to an impossible toil? Have I been telling Christians to pray for that which never can be granted? Ah, no, blessed be God! We are taught to pray for nothing but that which God has been pleased to give. He has told us to pray that His kingdom may come and His kingdom will come and come most assuredly, too! Hark! Hark! Hark! I hear mustering for the battle! Yonder in the dim distance I see the armies gathering. Yes, I can dimly see their ensign and behold the flag that waves before them! Who are these that come? Who are these? These are nobler and better men than we! These are warriors of Christ, as yet, perhaps, unborn. These are the mighty men, the

rear-guard. These are the imperial guard of heaven who have long been fighting. The enemy has sometimes fled, but so far we have achieved but little. The army of the foe still stands fast and firm and we have blunted our blades against the shields of the mighty. As yet the victory is not complete. The Master stands on the hill with His reserve. Lo! I see them—they are coming, they are coming! Some of us shall live to see them—men whose tongues are made of fire, whose hearts are full of flame, who speak like angels and preach like cherubim! The men are coming and happy shall the man be who marks the triumph! Each tramp of theirs shall be the tramp of victory, each blast of their horn shall *clear an acre of valiant foes!* Each stroke from their sword shall cleave a dragon and every blow from their arm shall be mighty to overturn thrones and scepters and kings! They come, they come! And till they come, what shall we do? Why fight on and hold our posts! Let us be cheered with the thought that victory is certain. The hour comes when this mighty band of heroes shall sweep the earth with the banner of victory! And when, in years to come, you and I shall look upon the plain of battle, we shall see there an idol broken, there a colossal system of wickedness dashed in pieces, there a false prophet slain, there a deluder cast away! Oh, glorious shall be that day when victory shall be complete! When the horse and the rider shall be overthrown! When the battle that is without blood and without smoke, without rolling of garments of warriors shall be completed by the shout of victory through Him who has loved us!

Beloved, we will wait a while. We will still continue on this side with our Master, for though we are now fighters, we shall be winners, by-and-by! Yes, man, woman, you who are unknown, unnoted but are striving for your Master by prayer and praise and labor—the day is coming when everyone of you shall have a crown of victory! The hour is coming when your heart shall beat high, for you shall share the conquest! Those men who are coming, without whom we cannot be made perfect, shall not have all the honor. We who have borne the brunt of the fight shall have a share of the glory. The victors shall divide the spoil and we shall divide the spoil with them! You, tried, afflicted, forgotten and unknown—you shall soon have the palm branch in your hand and you shall ride in triumph through the streets of earth and heaven when your Master shall openly make a show of principalities and powers in the day of His victory! Only still continue, only wrestle on and you shall be crowned!

But I have got one word to say and then, Amen. You know in Roman warfare there were special rewards given for special works. There was the mural crown for the man that first scaled the rampart and stood upon the wall. I am looking on this great congregation with a thought in my mind which agitates my spirit. Young men! Young men! Is there not one among you who can win a mural crown? Have I not one true Christian

heart here that is set for work and labor? Have not I one man who will devote himself to God and His truth? Henry Martyn! You are dead; and is your mantle buried with you? Brainerd, you sleep with your fathers; and is your spirit dead too, and shall there never be another Brainerd? Knibb, you have ascended to your God; and is there nowhere another Knibb? Williams, your martyred blood still cries from the ground; and is there nowhere another Williams? What? Not among this dense mass of young and burning spirits? Is there not one who can say in his heart, "Here am I, send me"? "Lo, this hour, being saved by God's grace, I give myself up to Him, to go wherever He shall please to send me, to testify His gospel in foreign lands"? What? Are there no Pauls? Have we none who will be apostles for the Lord of hosts? I think I see one who, putting his lips together, makes this silent resolve—"By God's grace I this day devote myself to Him. Through trouble and through trial I will be His, if He will help me, for missionary work or for anything else! I give up my all to God, and if I may die as Williams did, and wear the blood-red crown of martyrdom, I will be proud; and if I may live to serve my Master, like a Brainerd, and die at last, worn out, here I am! Do but have me, Master; give me the honor of leading the forlorn; the hope of leading the vanguard of Christianity. Here I am—send me!" O Lord, accept that young man! Lo, I consecrate him this day in Your name for that service! These outstretched hands this morning give a benediction to you, young hero of the cross! Your brother's heart beats with you—go, and go to victory! And if it must be mine to stay here to labor in a more easy and pleasant part of the vineyard, which I dare not leave, still I will envy you—that you have the honor of going to far distant lands. And I will pray for you, that your success may be great, and that through you the kingdoms of this world may be brought to Christ, and the knowledge of the Lord cover the earth! But we will all pray this prayer in our houses alone—"Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen."

You who are enemies to God, beware, beware, beware! It will be a hard thing to be found on the side of the enemy in the great battle of right!

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REGENERATION

NO. 130

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 3, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“Unless one is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
John 3:3.

IN daily life our thoughts are most occupied with things that are most necessary for our existence. No one murmured that the subject of the price of bread was frequently on the lips of men at a time of scarcity because they felt that the subject was one of vital importance to the mass of the population and, therefore, they murmured not—though they listened to continual declamatory speeches and read perpetual articles in the newspapers concerning it. I must offer the same excuse, then, for bringing before you, this morning, the subject of regeneration. It is one of absolute and vital importance. It is the hinge of the gospel! It is the point upon which most Christians are agreed, yes, all who are Christians in sincerity and truth. It is a subject which lies at the very basis of salvation. It is the very groundwork of our hopes for heaven and as we ought to be very careful of the basement of our structure, so should we be very diligent to take heed that we are really born-again and that we have made sure work of it for eternity. There are many who fancy they are born-again who are not. It well becomes us, then, to frequently examine ourselves. And it is the minister's duty to bring forward those subjects which lead to self-examination and have a tendency to search the heart and try the reins of the children of men.

To proceed at once, I shall first make some remarks upon *the new birth*; secondly, I shall note *what is meant by not being able to see the kingdom of God if we are not born-again*; then, I shall go further on to note *why it is that “Unless we are born-again we cannot see the kingdom of God”*; and then *expostulate with men* as God's ambassador before I close.

I. First, then, THE MATTER OF REGENERATION. In endeavoring to explain it, I must have you notice, first of all, *the figure that is employed*. It is said a man *must* be born-again. I cannot illustrate this better than by supposing a case. Suppose that in England there should be a law passed that admission to royal courts, preference in office and any privileges that might belong to the nation could only be given to persons who

were born in England? Suppose that birth in this land was made a *sine qua non* and it was definitely declared that whatever men might do or be, unless they were native-born subjects of England, they could not enter into her Majesty's presence! Nor could they enjoy any of the emoluments or offices of the state nor any of the privileges of citizens. I think if you suppose such a case, I shall be able to illustrate the difference between any changes and reforms that men make in themselves and the real work of being born-again. We will suppose, then, that some man—an American Indian for instance—should come to this country and should endeavor to obtain the privileges of citizenship, well knowing that the rule is absolute and cannot be altered—that a man must be a born subject—or else he cannot enjoy them. Suppose he says, "*I will change my name*, I will take up the name of an Englishman—I have been called by my high sounding title among the Sioux. I have been called the son of the Great West Wind, or some such name, but I will take an English name. I will be called a Christian man, an English subject." Will that admit him? You see him coming to the palace gates and asking for admission. He says, "I have taken an English name." "But are you an Englishman born and bred?" "I am not," he says. "Then the gates must be shut against you, for the law is absolute. And though you may have the name of even the royal family, itself, upon you, because you have not been born here, you must be shut out." That illustration will apply to all of us who are here present. At least, nearly the whole of us bear the professing Christian name. Living in England, you would think it a disgrace to you if you were not called Christian. You are not heathen, you are not infidel. You are neither Muslim nor Jew. You think that the name, Christian, is a creditable one to you and you have taken it. Be you quite assured that the *name* of a Christian is not the *nature* of a Christian and that your being born in a Christian land and being recognized as professing the Christian religion is of no use whatever unless there is something more added to it—the being born-again as a subject of Jesus Christ!

"But," says this American Indian, "I am prepared to *renounce my dress*, and to become an Englishman in fashion. In fact, I will go to the very top of the fashion! You shall not see me in anything differing from the accepted style of the present day. May I not, when I am arrayed in court dress and have decorated myself as etiquette demands, come in before her Majesty? See, I'll take off this plume, I will not shake this tomahawk, I renounce these garments. The moccasin I cast away forever. I am an Englishman in dress, as well as name!" He comes to the gate, dressed out like one of our own countrymen, but the gates are still shut in his face because the law requires that he must be born in this country. And without that, whatever his dress might be, he could not enter the palace.

How many are there of you who barely take the Christian name upon you, but have adopted Christian manners? You go to your churches and your chapels, you attend the house of God—you take care that there is some form of religion observed in your family—your children are not left without hearing the name of Jesus! So far, so good. God forbid that I should say a word against it! But remember, it is bad because you do not go further. All this is of no use whatever for admitting you into the kingdom of heaven—unless this is also complied with—*the being born-again!* Oh, dress yourselves ever so grandly with the clothes of godliness. Put the wreath of benevolence upon your brow and gird your loins with integrity. Put on your feet the shoes of perseverance and walk through the earth an honest and upright man. You are not a Christian, remember, unless you are born-again! “That which is of the flesh is flesh,” and you, not having the operations of the Spirit in you, still have heaven’s gates shut against you because you are not born-again!

“Well,” says this Indian, “I will not only adopt the dress but I will *learn the language*. I will put away, far away from my lips, my brogue and my language that I once spoke in the wild prairie or in the woods. I shall not talk of the Shu-Shuh-Gah and of the strange names wherewith I have called my wild fowl, and my deer, but I will speak as you speak and act as you act! I will not only have your dress but precisely your manners. I will talk in just the same fashion. I will adopt your brogue. I will take care that it shall be grammatically correct. Will you not then admit me? I have become thoroughly Anglicized. May I not then be received?” “No,” says the keeper of the door, “there is no admittance, for unless a man is born in this country, he cannot be admitted.” So with some of you—you talk just like Christians! Perhaps you have a little too much cant about you. You have begun so strictly to imitate what you think to be a godly man that you go a little beyond the mark and you gloss it so much that we are able to detect the counterfeit! Still you pass current among most men as being a right down sort of Christian! You have studied biographies and sometimes you tell long tales about divine experience. You have borrowed them from the biographies of good men. You have been with Christians and know how to talk as they do. You have even adopted a puritanical twang, perhaps! You go through the world just like professors do. And if you were to be observed, no one would detect you. You are a member of the church. You have been baptized. You take the Lord’s supper. Perhaps you are a deacon, or an elder. You pass the sacramental cup around. You are all that a Christian can be—except that you are without a Christian heart—you are whitewashed sepulchres, still full of rottenness within, though fairly garnished on the outside! Well, take heed, take heed! It is an astonishing thing, how near the painter can go

to the expression of life and yet the canvas is dead and motionless. And it is equally astonishing how near a man may go to a Christian and yet, through not being born-again, the absolute rule shuts him out of heaven! And with all his profession, with all the trappings of his professed godliness, and with all the gorgeous plumes of experience—he must be borne away from heaven's gates.

“You are uncharitable, Mr. Spurgeon.” I do not care what you say about that—I never wish to be more charitable than Christ. I did not say this—Christ said it. If you have any quarrel with Him, settle it there. I am not the maker of this truth but simply the speaker of it. I find it written, “Unless a man is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” If your footman should go to the door and deliver your message correctly, the man at the door might abuse him ever so much, but the footman would say, “Sir, do not abuse *me*, I cannot help it. I can only tell you what my *Master* told me. I am not the originator of it.” So if you think me uncharitable—remember you do not accuse *me*—you accuse *Christ!* You are not finding fault with the messenger, you are finding fault with the message. Christ has said it—“Unless a man is born-again.” I cannot dispute with you and shall not try. That is simply God's word. Reject it at your peril! Believe it and receive it, I entreat you, because it comes from the lips of the Most High!

But, now, note *the manner in which this regeneration is obtained*. I think I have none here so profoundly stupid as to be Puseyites. I can scarcely believe that I have been the means of attracting one person here so utterly devoid of every remnant of brain as to believe the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Yet I must just hint at it. There are some who teach that by a few drops of water sprinkled on an infant's brow, the infant becomes regenerate! Well, granted. And now I will find out your regenerate ones 20 years afterwards! The champion of the prize ring is a regenerated man. Oh, yes, he was regenerated, because in infancy he was baptized and, therefore, if all infants in baptism are regenerated, the prize fighter is a regenerate man! Take hold of him and receive him as your brother in the Lord. Do you hear that man swearing and blaspheming God? He is regenerate, believe me, he is regenerate! The priest put a few drops of water on his brow and he is a regenerated man. Do you see the drunkard reeling down the street, the pest of the neighborhood, fighting everybody and beating his wife, worse than a brute? Well, he is regenerate, he is one of those Puseyite regenerates—oh, goodly regenerate! Do you see the crowd assembled in the streets? The gallows is erected. Palmer is about to be executed, the man whose name should be cursed through all eternity for his villainy! He is one of those Puseyite regenerates! Yes, he is regenerate because he was baptized in infancy! Re-

generate while he mixes his strychnine! Regenerate while he slowly administers his poison—that he may cause death and infinite pain all the while he is causing it! Regenerate, indeed! If that is regeneration, such regeneration is not worth having—if that is the thing that makes us part of the kingdom of heaven, verily, the gospel is indeed a licentious gospel! We can say nothing about it. If that is the gospel—that all such men are regenerate and will be saved—we can only say that it would be the duty of every man in the world to ignore that gospel, because it is so inconsistent with the most common principles of morality that it could not possibly be of God, but of the devil!

But some say all are regenerate when they are baptized. Well, if you think so, stick to your own thoughts. I cannot help it. Simon Magus was certainly one exception—he was baptized on a profession of his faith, but so far from being regenerated by his baptism, we find Paul saying, “I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” And yet he was one of those regenerates because he had been baptized? Ah, that doctrine only needs to be stated to sensible men, and they will at once reject it! Gentlemen that are fond of a filigree religion and like ornament and show—gentlemen of the high Beau Brummel school—will very likely prefer this religion because they have cultivated their taste at the expense of their brain and have forgotten that what is inconsistent with the sound judgment of a man cannot be consistent with the word of God! So much for the first point.

Neither is a man regenerated, we say, in the next place, *by his own exertions*. A man may reform himself very much and that is well and good. Let all do that! A man may cast away many vices and forsake many lusts in which he indulged and conquer evil habits. But no man in the world can make himself to be born of God! Though he should struggle ever so much, he could never accomplish what is beyond his power. And, mark you, if he could make himself to be born-again, he would still not enter heaven because there is another point in the condition which he would have violated—“Unless a man is born of the *Spirit*, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” So that the best exertions of the flesh do not reach this high point—the being born-again of the Spirit of God!

And now we must say that regeneration consists in this—God the Holy Spirit, in a supernatural manner. Mark, by the word, *supernatural*, I mean just what it strictly means—supernatural, more than natural—works upon the hearts of men and then they, by the operations of the divine Spirit, become regenerate men. But without the Spirit, they never can be regenerated. And unless God the Holy Spirit, who, “works in us to will and to do,” should operate upon the will and the conscience—regeneration is an absolute impossibility and, therefore, so is salvation!

“What?” says one, “Do you mean to say that God absolutely interposes in the salvation of every man to make him regenerate?” I do indeed! In the salvation of every person, there is an actual putting forth of divine power whereby the dead sinner is quickened, the unwilling sinner is made willing and the desperately hard sinner has his conscience made tender—and he who rejected God and despised Christ is brought to cast himself down at the feet of Jesus! Maybe this is called fanatical doctrine—that we cannot help—it is a Scriptural doctrine—that is enough for us! “Unless a man is born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” If you like it not, quarrel with my Master, not with me! I do but simply declare His own revelation that there must be in your heart something more than *you* can ever work there. There must be a *divine* operation! Call it a miraculous operation if you please. There must be a divine interposition, a divine working, a divine influence, or else, do what you may, without that you perish, and are undone—“For unless a man is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The change is radical. It gives us new natures, makes us love what we hated and hate what we loved. It sets us on a new road, makes our habits different, our thoughts different—makes us different in private and different in public! So that being in Christ, it is fulfilled—“If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”

II. And now, I must come to the second point. I trust I have explained regeneration so that all may see what it is. Now WHAT DOES THE EXPRESSION, “SEEING THE KINGDOM OF GOD,” MEAN? It means two things. To see the kingdom of God on earth is to be a member of the mystical church—it is to enjoy the privileges and liberty of the child of God. To see the kingdom of heaven means to have power in prayer, to have communion with Christ, to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and to bring forth and produce all those joyous and blessed fruits which are the effect of regeneration. In a higher sense, “to see the kingdom of God,” means to be admitted into heaven. “Unless a man is born-again,” he cannot know about heavenly things on earth, and he cannot enjoy heavenly blessings forever—“he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

III. I think I may just pass over the second point without remark, and proceed to notice in the third place, WHY IT IS THAT, “UNLESS A MAN IS BORN-AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD”? And I will confine my remarks to the kingdom of God in the world to come.

Why, he cannot see the kingdom of God *because he would be out of place in heaven!* A man that is not born-again could not enjoy heaven! There is an actual impossibility in his nature which prevents him from enjoying any of the bliss of paradise. You think, maybe, that heaven con-

sists in those walls of jewels, in those pearly gates and streets of gold? Not so. That is the habitation of heaven! Heaven dwells there, but that is not heaven. Heaven is a state that is made here, that is made in the heart, made by God's Spirit within us and unless God the Spirit has renewed us and caused us to be born-again, we cannot enjoy the things of heaven! Why, it is a physical impossibility that ever a swine should deliver a lecture on astronomy. Every man will clearly perceive that it must be impossible that a snail should build a city. And there is just as much impossibility that a sinner could enjoy heaven. Why, there would be nothing there for him to enjoy! If he could be put into the place where heaven is, he would be miserable. He would cry, "Let me go, let me go! Let me out of this miserable place!" I appeal to you. Very often a sermon is too long for you. The singing of God's praises is dull dry work. You think that going up to God's house is very tedious. What will you do where they praise God day and night? If just a short discourse, here, is very wearying, what will you think of the eternal talking of the redeemed through all ages of the wonders of redeeming love? If the company of the righteous is very irksome to you, what will be their company throughout eternity? I think many of you are free to confess that psalm singing is not a bit to your taste, that you care nothing about any spiritual things! Give you your bottle of wine and set you down at your ease—that is heaven for you! Well, there is no such a heaven yet made! And, therefore, there is no heaven for you. The only heaven there is, is the heaven of spiritual men and women, the heaven of praise, the heaven of delight in God, the heaven of acceptance in the beloved, the heaven of communion with Christ! Now, you do not understand anything about this. You could not enjoy it if you were to have it! You have not the capabilities for doing so. You, yourselves, from the very fact of your not being born-again, are your own barrier to heaven—and if God were to open the gate wide and say, "Come in," you could not enjoy heaven if you were admitted—for unless a man is born-again, there is an impossibility, a moral impossibility, of his seeing the kingdom of God! Suppose there are some persons here who are entirely deaf, who have never heard sounds. Well, I say they cannot hear singing. Do I, when I say it, say a cruel thing? It is their disability that prevents them. So when God says you cannot see the kingdom of heaven, He means it is your disability of not being born-again that prevents you ever entering there.

But there are some other reasons. There are reasons why—

***"Those holy gates forever bar
Pollution, sin and shame."***

There are reasons, besides those in yourself, why you cannot see the kingdom of God unless you are born-again. *Ask yon spirits* before the throne of God—"Angels, principalities and powers, would you be willing

that men who do not love God, who believe not in Christ, who have not been born-again, should dwell here?" I see them, as they look down upon us and hear them answering, "No! Once we fought the dragon and expelled him because he tempted us to sin! We must not and we will not have the wicked here! These alabaster walls must not be soiled with sin-black and lustful fingers. The white pavement of heaven must not be stained and rendered filthy by the unholy feet of ungodly men. No!" I see a thousand spears bristling and the fiery faces of a myriad seraphs thrust over the walls of paradise. "No, while these arms have strength and these wings have power, no sin shall ever enter here." I address myself moreover to the saints in heaven redeemed by sovereign grace—"Children of God, are you willing that the wicked should enter heaven as they are, without being born-again? You love men. Say, are you willing that they should be admitted as they are?" I see Lot rise up and he cries, "Admit them into heaven! No! What? Must I be vexed by the conversation of Sodomites again, as once I was?" I see Abraham. And he comes forward and he says, "No. I cannot have them here. I had enough of them while I was with them on earth—their jests and jeers, their silly talk, their vain conversation vexed and grieved us. We don't want them here." And, heavenly though they are, and loving as their spirits are, yet there is not a saint in heaven who would not resent, with the utmost indignation, the approach of anyone of you to the gates of paradise if you are still unholy and have not been born-again!

But all that were nothing. We might, perhaps, scale the ramparts of heaven, if they were only protected by angels, and burst the gates of paradise open, if only the saints defended them. But there is another reason than that—*God has said it Himself*—"Unless a man is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." What? Sinner! Will you scale the battlements of paradise when God is ready to thrust you down to hell? Will you, with impudent face, brazen Him out? God has said it! God has said it with a voice of thunder, "You shall not see the kingdom of heaven!" Can you wrestle with the Almighty? Can you overthrow Omnipotence? Can you grapple with the Most High? Worm of the dust! Can you overcome your Maker? Trembling insect of an hour, shaken by the lightning when far overhead they flash far across the sky, will you dare the hand of God? Will you venture to defy Him to His face? Ah, He would laugh at you! As the snow melts before the sun, as wax runs at the fierceness of the fire—so would you—if His fury should once lay hold of you! Think not that you can overcome Him. He has sealed the gates of paradise against you and there is no entrance. The God of justice says, "I will not reward the wicked with the righteous. I will not suffer my goodly, godly paradise to be stained by wicked ungodly men. If they turn I will have mercy upon

them, but if they turn not, as I live, I will tear them in pieces and there shall be none to deliver." Now, sinner, can you brazen it out against Him? Will you rush upon the thick points of Jehovah's shields? Will you try to scale His heaven when His arrow is stringed upon the bow to reach your heart? What? When the glittering sword is at your neck and ready to slay you, will you endeavor to strive against your Maker? No, potsherd, no! Contend with your fellow potsherd! Go, crawling grasshopper. Go, fight with your brothers! Strive with them, but come not against the Almighty! He has said it and you never shall, you never shall enter heaven unless you are born-again! Again, I say quarrel not with me. I have but delivered my Master's message. Take it, disbelieve it if you dare, but if you believe it, rail not at me, for it is God's message, and I speak it in love to your soul, lest, lacking it, you should perish in the dark, and walk blindfolded to your everlasting punishment!

IV. Now, my friends, A LITTLE EXPOSTULATION WITH YOU; and then farewell. I hear one man say, "Well, well, well, I see it. *I will hope that I shall be born-again after I am dead.*" Oh, sir, believe me, you will be a miserable fool for your pains! When men die their state is fixed—

***"Fixed is their everlasting state,
Could they repent, 'tis now too late."***

Our life is like that wax melting in the flame. Death puts its stamp on it and then it cools and the impression never can be changed. Today you are like the burning metal running forth from the cauldron into the mold. Death cools you in your mold and you are cast in that shape throughout eternity! The voice of doom cries over the dead, "He that is holy, let him be holy still. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." The damned are lost forever! They cannot be born-again! They go on cursing, ever being cursed, ever fighting against God, and ever being trampled beneath His feet. They go on ever mocking, ever being laughed at for their mockery, ever rebelling and ever being tortured with the whips of conscience because they are ever sinning. They cannot be regenerated because they are dead!

"Well," says another, "*I will take care that I am regenerated just before I die.*" Sir, I repeat again, you are a fool in talking thus! How do you know that you shall live? Have you taken a lease of your life, as you have of your house? Can you ensure the breath within your nostrils? Can you say in certainty that another ray of light shall ever reach your eyes? Can you be sure that as your heart is beating a funeral march to the grave, you will not soon beat the last note and so you shall die where you stand or now sit? Oh, man, if your bones were iron and your sinews brass and your lungs steel, then you might say, "I shall live." But you are made of dust! You are like the flower of the field—you may die right now! Lo! I see death standing yonder, moving to and fro; the stone of time upon his

scythe to sharpen it. Today, today, for some of you, he “grasps the scythe”—and away, away, he mows the fields and you fall, one by one! You must not and you cannot live. God carries us away as a flood, like a ship in a whirlpool—like a log in a current dashed onward to the waterfall. There is no stopping any one of us—we are all dying! And yet *you* say you will be regenerated before you die? Yes, sirs, but are you regenerated *now*? For if not, it may be too late to hope for tomorrow! Tomorrow you may be in hell, sealed up forever by adamant destiny which never can be moved.

“Well,” cries another, “*I do not care much about it*; for I see very little in being shut out of Paradise.” Ah, sir, it is because you do not understand it! You smile at it now, but there will be a day when your conscience will be tender, when your memory will be strong, when your judgment will be enlightened and when you will think very differently from what you do now. Sinners in hell are not the fools they were on earth! In hell they do not laugh at everlasting fires. In the pit of hell they do not despise the words, “eternal fire.” The worm that never dies, when it is gnawing, gnaws out all jokes and laughter. You may despise God, now, and despise me, now, for what I say, but death will change your tune! Oh my hearers, if that were all, I would be willing. You may despise me, yes, you may. But oh, I beseech you, do not despise yourselves! Oh be not so foolhardy as to go whistling to hell and laughing to the pit. For when you are there, sirs, you will find it a different thing from what you dream it to be now. When you see the gates of Paradise shut against you—you will find it to be a more important matter than you judge of now. You came to hear me preach, today, as you would have gone to the opera or playhouse. You thought I would amuse you. Ah, that is not my aim! God is my witness, I came here solemnly in earnest to wash my hands of your blood! If you are damned, any one of you, it shall not be because I did not warn you! Men and women, if you perish, my hands are washed in innocence. I have told you of your doom. I again cry—REPENT, REPENT, REPENT—for, “Unless you repent you shall all likewise perish.” I came here determined this morning if I must use rough words to use them—to speak right out against men and for men too; for the things we say against you, now, are really for your good. We do but warn you, lest you perish! But ah, I hear one of you saying, “I do not understand this mystery, pray explain it to me.” Fool, fool that you are! Do you see that fire? We are startled up from our beds, the light is at the window. We rush downstairs. People are hurrying to and fro. The street is trampled thick with crowds—they are rushing towards the house which is in a burst of flame. The firemen are at their work. A stream of water is pouring upon the house. But hark! Hark! There is a man upstairs—there is a man in

the top room! There is just time for him to escape, but barely. A shout is raised—"Aho! Fire! Fire! Fire! Aho!"—but the man does not make his appearance at the window. Look, the ladder is placed against the walls. It is up to the window sill—a strong hand dashes in the easement! Where is the man? What? Is he tied down in his bed? Is he a cripple? Has some fiend got hold of him and nailed him to the floor? No, no, no—he feels the boards getting hot beneath his feet, the smoke is stifling him, the flame is burning all around; he knows there is but one way of escape—by that ladder! What is he doing? He is sitting down—no! You cannot believe me! He is sitting down and saying, "The origin of this fire is very mysterious. I wonder how it is to be discovered? How shall we understand it?" Why, you laugh at him! You are laughing at yourselves! You are seeking to have this question and that question answered—when your soul is in peril of eternal fire! Oh, when you are saved, it will then be time to ask questions. But while you are now in the burning house and in danger of destruction, it is not your time to be puzzling yourselves about free will, fixed fate, absolute predestination; all these questions are good and well enough afterwards, for those who are saved. Let the man on shore try to find out the cause of the storm. Your only business, now, is to ask, "What must I do to be saved? And how can I escape from the great damnation that awaits me?"

But ah, my friends, I cannot speak as I wish. I think I feel, this morning, something like Dante, when he wrote his *"Il inferno."* Men said of him that he had been in hell. He looked like it. He had thought of it so long that they said, "He has been in hell." He spoke with such an awful earnestness. Ah, if I could, I would speak like that, too! It is only a few days more and I shall meet you face to face. I can look over the lapse of a few years, when you and I shall stand face to face before God's bar. "Watchman, Watchman," asks a voice, "did you warn them? Did you warn them?" Will any of you then say I did not? No, even the most abandoned of you will at that day say, "We laughed, we scoffed at it; we cared not for it, but, O Lord, we are obliged to speak the truth. The man was in earnest about it; he told us of our doom and he is clear." Will you say so? I know you will!

But yet this one more remark—to be cast out of heaven is an awful thing. Some of you have parents there. You have dear friends there. They grasped your hands in death and said, "Farewell, until we meet again." But if you never see the kingdom of God, you can never see them again! "My mother," says one, "sleeps in the graveyard. I often go to the tomb, and put some flowers upon it, in remembrance of her who nursed me; but must I never see her again?" No, never again! No, never, unless you are born-again! Mothers, you have had infants that have gone to heaven.

You would like to see your family all around the throne of God—but you will never see your children again unless you are born-again! Will you bid adieu this day to the immortal? Will you say farewell this hour to your glorified friends in paradise? You must say so, or else be converted! You must fly to Christ and trust in Him, and His Spirit must renew you, or else you must look up to heaven and say, “Choir of the blessed, I shall never hear you sing! Parents of my youth, guardians of my infancy, I love you but between you and myself there is a great gulf fixed. I am cast away and you are saved.” Oh, I beseech you, think on these matters! And when you go away, let it not be to forget what I have said. If you are at all impressed, this morning, put not away the impression. It may be your last warning. It will be a sorrowful thing to be lost with the notes of the gospel in your ears, and to perish under the ministry of truth. May it, by the grace of God, never be so. Amen and Amen.

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SALVATION OF THE LORD

NO. 131

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 10, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“Salvation is of the Lord.”
Jonah 2:9.

JONAH learned this sentence of good theology in a strange college. He learned it in the whale’s belly, at the bottom of the mountains, with the weeds wrapped about his head, when he supposed that the earth with her bars was about him forever! Most of the grand truths of God have to be learned by trouble. They must be burned into us with the hot iron of affliction; otherwise we shall not truly receive them. No man is competent to judge in matters of the kingdom of God, until first he has been tried—since there are many things to be learned in the depths which we can never know in the heights. We discover many secrets in the caverns of the ocean, which, though we had soared to heaven, we could never have known. He shall best meet the needs of God’s people as a preacher who has had those needs himself. He shall best comfort God’s Israel who has needed comfort. And he shall best preach salvation who has felt his own need of it. Jonah, when he was delivered from his great danger—by the command of God, the fish had obediently left its great deeps and delivered its cargo upon dry land—was then capable of judging. And this was the result of his experience under his trouble—“Salvation is of the Lord.”

By, salvation here we do not merely understand the special salvation which Jonah received from death, for according to Dr. Gill, there is something so special in the original, in the word, “Salvation,” having one more letter than it usually has, when it only refers to some temporary deliverance, that we can only understand it, here, as relating to the great work of the salvation of the soul which endures forever. That “Salvation is of the Lord,” I shall, this morning, try to show as best I can. First, I shall endeavor to *explain the doctrine* then I shall *try to show you how God has guarded us from making any mistakes, and has hedged us up to make us believe the gospel*; then I shall dwell upon *the influence of this truth upon men*; and I shall close up by showing you *the counterpart of the doctrine*. Seeing every truth has its obverse, so has this.

I. First, then, to begin by explanation, let us EXPOUND THIS DOCTRINE—the doctrine that salvation is of the Lord, or of Jehovah. We are to understand by this, that the whole of the work whereby men are saved

from their natural estate of sin and ruin and are translated into the kingdom of God and made heirs of eternal happiness is of God and of Him only. "Salvation is of the Lord."

To begin, then, at the beginning, *the plan of salvation is entirely of God*. No human intellect and no created intelligence assisted God in the planning of salvation. He contrived the way, even as He, Himself, carried it out. The plan of salvation was devised before the existence of angels. Before the daystar flung its rays across the darkness—when as yet the unnavigated ether had not been fanned by the wing of seraph and when the solemnity of silence had never been disturbed by the song of angel—God had devised a way whereby He might save man, whom, in His sovereignty, He ordained would fall. He did not create angels to consult with them. No, of Himself He did it! We might truly ask the question, "With whom took He counsel? Who instructed Him when He planned the great architecture of the temple of mercy? With whom took He counsel when he dug the deeps of love, that out of them there might well up springs of salvation? Who aided Him?" No one! He did it alone. In fact, if angels had then been in existence, they could not have assisted God. I can well suppose that if a solemn conclave of those spirits had been held, if God had told them, "Men will rebel. I declare I will punish them. My justice, inflexible and severe, demands that I should do so. But yet I intend to have mercy." If he had put the question to the celestial squadrons of mighty ones, "How can these things be? How can justice have its demands fulfilled and how can mercy reign?" the angels would have sat in silence until now—they could not have dictated a plan! It would have surpassed angelic intellect to have conceived the way whereby righteousness and peace should meet together and judgment and mercy should kiss each other. God devised it because without God it could not have been devised! It is a plan too splendid to have been the product of any mind except of that mind which afterwards carried it out. "Salvation" is older than creation. It is "of the Lord."

And as it was of the Lord in planning, *so it was of the Lord in execution*. No one has helped to provide salvation. God has done it all Himself. The banquet of mercy is served up by one Host—that host is He to whom the cattle on a thousand hills belong! But none have contributed any dainties to that royal banquet. He has done it all Himself. The royal bath of mercy, wherein black souls are washed, was filled from the veins of Jesus—not a drop was contributed by any other being. He died upon the cross and as an expiator, He died alone! No blood of martyrs mingles with that stream. No blood of noble confessors and of heroes of the cross entered into the river of atonement. That is filled from the veins of Christ and from nowhere else! He has wholly done it. Atonement is the unaided work of Jesus. On yonder cross I see the Man who "trode the winepress

alone.” In yonder garden I see the solitary Conqueror who came to the fight single-handed, whose own arm brought salvation and whose omnipotence sustained Him. “Salvation is of the Lord.” As to its provisions—Jehovah—Father, Son and Spirit—have provided everything!

So far we are all agreed, but now we shall have to separate a bit. “Salvation is of the Lord,” *in the application of it*. “No,” says the Arminian, “it is not! Salvation is of the Lord inasmuch as He does all for man that He can do. But there is something that man must do, which if he does not do, he will perish.” That is the Arminian way of salvation. Now last week I thought of this very theory of salvation when I stood by the side of that window of Carisbrooke Castle out of which King Charles, of unhappy and unrighteous memory, attempted to escape. I read in the guide book that everything was provided for his escape—his followers had means at the bottom of the wall to enable him to flee across the country, and on the coast they had their boats lying ready to take him to another land! In fact, everything was ready for his escape. But here was the important circumstance—his friends had done all they could—he was to do the rest. But that doing the rest was just the point and brunt of the battle—it was to get out of the window—out of which he was not able to escape by any means, so that all his friends did for him went for nothing, as far as he was concerned! So with the sinner. If God had provided every means of escape and only required him to get out of his dungeon, he would have remained there to all eternity! Why, is not the sinner, by nature, *dead in sin*? And if God requires him to make himself alive and then, afterwards He will do the rest for him, then verily, my friends, we are not so much obliged to God as we had thought! For if He requires so much as that of us, and we can do it, we can do the rest without His assistance! The Romanists have an extraordinary miracle of their own about St. Dennis, of whom they tell the lying legend that after his head was off, he took it up in his hands and walked 2,000 miles with it! Whereupon said a wit, “So far as the 2,000 miles go, it is nothing at all! It is only the *first step* in which there is any difficulty.” So I believe, if that is taken, all the rest can be easily accomplished! And if God requires of the sinner—dead in sin—that he should take the first step, then He requires just that which renders salvation as impossible under the gospel as ever it was under the law, because man is as unable to *believe* as he is to *obey*—and is just as much without power to come to Christ as he is without power to go to heaven without Christ! The power must be given to him of the Spirit. He lies dead in sin. The Spirit must quicken him. He is bound hand and foot and fettered by transgression. The Spirit must cut his bonds and *then* he will leap to liberty! God must come and dash the iron bars out of their sockets and *then* he can escape from the window and make good his escape afterwards! But unless the first thing is done for him, he must per-

ish as surely under the gospel as he would have done under the law! I would cease to preach if I believed that God, in the matter of salvation, required anything whatever of man which He, Himself, had not also engaged to furnish! How many have I frequently hanging upon my lips of the worst of characters—men whose lives have become so horribly bad that the lips of morality would refuse to give a description of their character? When I enter my pulpit, am I to believe that these men are to do something before God's Spirit will operate upon them? If so, I would go there with a faint heart, feeling that I never could induce them to do the first part! But now I come to my pulpit with a sure confidence—God the Holy Spirit will meet with these men this morning! They are as bad as they can be. He will put a new thought into their hearts! He will give them new wishes. He will give them new wills and those who hated Christ will desire to love Him! Those who once loved sin will, by God's divine Spirit, be made to hate it and here is my confidence—that what they cannot do, in that they are weak through the flesh—God, sending His Spirit into their hearts, will do for them and in them—and so they shall be saved!

“Well, then,” says one, “that will make people sit still and fold their arms.” Sir, it will not! But if men did so, I could not help it—my business—as I have often said in this place, is not to prove to you the reasonableness of any truth, nor to defend any truth from its consequences. All I do here—and I mean to keep to it—is just to assert the truth because it is in the Bible! Then, if you do not like it, you must settle the quarrel with my Master—and if you think it unreasonable, you must quarrel with the Bible. Let others defend Scripture and prove it to be true; they can do their work better than I could—mine is just the mere work of proclaiming. I am the *messenger*. I speak my Master's message. If you do not like the message, quarrel with the Bible, not with me! As long as I have Scripture on my side, I will dare and defy you to do anything against me! “Salvation is of the Lord.” The Lord has to apply it, to make the unwilling, willing, to make the ungodly, godly, and bring the vile rebel to the feet of Jesus or else salvation will never be accomplished! Leave that one thing undone and you have broken the link of the chain, the very link which was necessary to its integrity. Take away the fact that God begins the good work and that He sends us what the old divines call preventing grace—take that away and you have spoiled the whole of salvation—you have taken the keystone out of the arch and down it tumbles! Then there is nothing left.

And now on the next point we shall again disagree a little. “Salvation is of the Lord,” *as to the sustaining of the work in any man's heart*. When a man is made a child of God, he does not have a stock of grace given to him with which to go on forever. But he has grace for that day. And he

must have grace for the next day and grace for the next and grace for the next, until days shall end, or else the beginning shall be of no avail. As a man does not make himself spiritually alive, so neither can he keep himself so. He can feed on spiritual food and so preserve his spiritual strength. He can walk in the commandments of the Lord and so enjoy rest and peace, but still, the inner life is dependent upon the Spirit as much for its after existence as for its first begetting! I do verily believe that if it should ever be my lot to put my foot upon the golden threshold of paradise and put this thumb upon the pearly latch, I would never cross the threshold unless I had grace given me to take that last step whereby I might enter heaven! No man of himself, even when converted, has any power except as that power is daily, constantly and perpetually infused into him by the Spirit! But Christians often set up for independent gentlemen. They get a little stock of grace in hand and they say, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved." But ah, it is not long before the manna begins to be putrid. It was only meant to be the manna for the day and we have kept it for the morrow and, therefore, it fails us! We must have fresh grace—

***"For day by day the manna fell,
Oh to learn that lesson well."***

So look day by day for fresh grace! Frequently, too, the Christian wants to have grace enough for a month vouchsafed to him in one moment. "Oh," he says, "what a host of troubles I have coming—how shall I meet them all? Oh, that I had enough grace to bear me through them all!" My dear friends, you will have grace enough for your troubles, as they come, one by one! "As your days, so shall your strength be." But your strength shall never be as your months, or as your weeks. You shall have your strength as you have your bread. "Give us this day our daily bread." Give us this day our daily grace. But why is it you will get to troubling yourself about the things of tomorrow? The common people say, "Cross a bridge when you come to it." That is good advice! Do the same. When a trouble comes, attack it, and down with it, and master it! But do not begin, now, to forestall your woes. "Ah, but I have so many" says one. Therefore I say do not look further before you than your needs. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Do as the brave Grecian did, who, when he defended his country from Persia, did not go into the plains to fight, but stood in the narrow pass of Thermopylae. There, when the myriads came to him, they had to come one by one, and he felled them to the earth. Had he ventured into the plain, he would have soon been devoured and his handful would have been melted like a drop of dew in the sea. Stand in the narrow pass of today, and fight your troubles, one by one. Do not rush into the plains of tomorrow, for there you will be routed and

killed. As the evil is sufficient so will the grace be! “Salvation is of the Lord.”

But lastly, upon this point. *The ultimate perfection of salvation is of the Lord.* Soon, soon, the saints of earth shall be saints in light. Their hairs of snowy age shall be crowned with perpetual joy and everlasting youth. Their eyes, suffused with tears, shall be made bright as stars, never again to be clouded by sorrow. Their hearts that now tremble are to be made joyous and fast and set forever like pillars in the temple of God! Their follies, their burdens, their griefs, their woes, are soon to be over! Sin is to be slain, corruption is to be removed and a heaven of spotless purity and of unmingled peace is to be theirs forever! But it must still be by grace. As was the foundation, such must the top stone be. That which laid on earth the first beginning, must lay in heaven the topmost stone. As they were redeemed from their filthy conversation by grace, so they must be redeemed from death and the grave by grace, too, and they must enter heaven singing—

**“Salvation of the Lord alone,
Grace is a shoreless sea!”**

There may be Arminians here but they will not be Arminians there! They may here say, “It is of the will of the flesh,” but in heaven they shall not think so! Here they may ascribe some little to the creature, but there they shall cast their crowns at the Redeemer’s feet, and acknowledge that He did it all! Here they may sometimes look a little at themselves and boast somewhat of their own strength, but there, “Not unto us, not unto us,” shall be sung with deeper sincerity and with more profound emphasis than they have ever sung it here below! In heaven, when grace shall have done its work, this truth of God shall stand out in blazing letters of gold, “Salvation is of the Lord.”

II. Thus I have tried to expound the gospel. Now I shall show you HOW GOD HAS HEDGED THIS DOCTRINE ABOUT.

Some have said salvation, in some cases, is the result of *natural temperament*. Well, sir, God has effectually answered your argument. You say that some people are saved because they are naturally religious and inclined to be good? Unfortunately I have never met with any of that class of persons yet. But I will suppose for a moment that there are such people. God has unanswerably met your objection, for, strange to say, the great number of those who are saved are just the most unlikely people in the world to have been saved, while a great number of those who perish were once just the very people whom, if natural disposition had anything to do with it, we would have expected to see in heaven! Why, there is one here who in his youth was a child of many follies. Often did his mother weep over him and cry and groan over her son’s wanderings, for with a fierce high spirit that could brook neither bit nor bridle, with

perpetual rebellions and outbursts of hot anger, she said, "My son my son, what will you be in your riper years? Surely you will dash in pieces law and order and be a disgrace to your father's name!" He grew up. In youth he was wild and wanton, but wonder of wonders, all of a sudden he became a new man, changed, altogether changed, no more like what he was before, than angels are like lost spirits! He sat at her feet, he cheered her heart, and the lost, fiery one became gentle, mild, as humble as a little child and obedient to God's commandments. You say, wonder of wonders! But there is another here. He was a fair youth—when but a child he talked of Jesus. Often when his mother had him on her knee, he asked her questions about heaven. He was a prodigy, a wonder of piety in his youth! As he grew up, the tears rolled down his cheek under any sermon, he could scarcely bear to hear of death without a sigh. Sometimes his mother caught him, as she thought, alone in prayer. And what is he now? He has just this very morning come from sin! He has become the debauched, desperate villain! He has gone far into all manner of wickedness and lust and sin and has become more damnably corrupt than other men could have made him! His evil spirit, once confined, has now developed itself—he has learned to play the lion in his manhood, as once he played the fox in his youth. I do not know whether you have ever met with such a case. But it very frequently is so. I know I can say that in my congregation some abandoned, wicked fellows have had their hearts broken and been led to weep and have cried to God for mercy. By His grace they have renounced their vile sins, while some fair maiden has heard the same sermon and if there was a tear she brushed it away. She still continues just what she was, "without God and without hope in the world." God has taken the base things of the world and has picked His people out of the very roughest of men in order that He may prove that it is not natural disposition, but that "Salvation is of the Lord," alone!

"Well," but some say, "It is the *minister* they hear who converts men." Ah, that is a grand idea, full sure! No man but a fool would entertain it! I met with a man sometime ago who assured me that he knew a minister who had a very large amount of converting power in him. Speaking of a great evangelist in America, he said, "That man, sir, has got the greatest quantity of converting power I ever knew a man to have. And Mr. So-and-So in a neighboring town, I think is second to him." At that time this converting power was being exhibited—two hundred persons were converted by the converting power of this second best—and joined to the church in a few months. I went to the place some time afterwards—it was in England—and I said, "How do your converts get on?" "Well," he said, "I cannot say much about them." "How many out of those 200 whom you received in a year ago stand fast?" "Well," he said, "I am afraid not many of them. We have turned 70 of them out for drunkenness already." "Yes,"

I said, "I thought so—that is the end of the grand experiment of converting power!" If I could convert you all, anyone else might unconvert you! What any man can do, another man can undo. It is only what *God* does that is abiding!

No, my brothers and sisters—God has taken good care it shall never be said conversion is of *man*—for usually He blesses those who seem to be the most unlikely to be useful! I do not expect to see as many conversions in this place as I had a year ago when I had far fewer hearers. Do you ask why? Why, a year ago I was abused by everybody. To mention my name was to mention the name of the most abominable buffoon that lived! The mere utterance of it brought forth oaths and cursing. With many men, it was a name of contempt, kicked about the street as a football. But then God gave me souls by hundreds who were added to my church, and in one year it was my happiness to see not less than a thousand personally who had then been converted! I do not expect that now. My name is somewhat esteemed now, and the great ones of the earth think it no dishonor to sit at my feet. But this makes me fear lest my God should forsake me, now that the world esteems me. I would rather be despised and slandered than anything else! The assembly that you think so grand and fine, I would readily part with, if by such a loss I could gain a greater blessing. "God has chosen the base things of the world." And therefore I reckon that the more esteemed I may be, the worse is my position—so much the less expectation shall I have that God will bless me. He has put His "treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of man." A poor minister began to preach, once, and the entire world spoke ill of him, but God blessed him. By-and-by they turned round and petted him. He was the man—a wonder! God left him! It has often been the same. It is for us to remember, in all times of popularity, that "Crucify Him, crucify Him" follows fast upon the heels of "Hosanna." The crowd today, if dealt faithfully with, may turn into the handful of tomorrow, for men love not plain speaking. We should learn to be despised, learn to be slandered—and then we shall learn to be made useful by God! Down on my knees have I often fallen, with the hot sweat rising from my brow under some fresh slander poured upon me. In an agony of grief my heart has been well-near broken till at last I learned the art of bearing all, and caring for none! And now my grief runs in another line. It is just the opposite. I fear lest God should forsake me, to prove that He is the author of salvation—that it is not in the preacher, that it is not in the crowd, that it is not in the attention I can attract, but in God and in God, alone! And this thing I hope I can say from my heart—if to be made as the mire of the streets, again; if to be the laughing stock of fools, and the song of the drunkard once more will make me more serviceable to my Master, and more useful to His cause—I will prefer it to all this

multitude, or to all the applause that man could give! Pray for me, dear friends, pray for me, that God would still make me the means of the salvation of souls. For I fear He may say, "I will not help that man, lest the world should say *he* has done it," for, "Salvation is of the Lord," and so it must be, even to the world's end.

III. And now, WHAT IS—WHAT SHOULD BE THE INFLUENCE OF THIS DOCTRINE UPON MEN?

Why, first, with sinners, this doctrine *is a great battering-ram against their pride!* I will give you a figure. The sinner in his natural estate reminds me of a man who has a strong and well-near impenetrable castle into which he has fled. There is the outer moat. There is a second moat. There are the high walls and then, afterwards, there is the dungeon, into which the sinner will retire. Now, the first moat that goes round the sinner's trusting place is his good works. "Ah," he says, "I am as good as my neighbor! Twenty shillings in the pound, down, ready money, I have always paid. I am no sinner. I tithe mint and cumin. I am indeed a good respectable gentleman!" Well, when God comes to work with him to save him, He sends His army across the first moat. And as they go through it, they cry, "Salvation is of the Lord." And the moat is dried up, for if it is of the Lord, how can it be of good works? But when that is done, he has a second entrenchment—ceremonies. "Well," he says, "I will not trust in my good works, but I have been baptized, I have been confirmed—do not I take the sacrament—that shall be my trust!" "Over the moat; over the moat!" And the soldiers go over again, shouting, "Salvation is of the Lord." The second moat is dried up it is all over with that. Now they come to the first strong wall. The sinner, looking over it, says, "I can repent, I can believe whenever I like. I will save myself by repenting and believing." Up come the soldiers of God, His great army of conviction, and they batter this wall to the ground, crying, "Salvation is of the Lord.' Your faith and your repentance must all be given up, or else you will neither believe nor repent of sin." And now the castle is taken! The man's hopes are all cut off. He feels that it is not of self. The castle of self is overcome and the great banner upon which is written, "Salvation is of the Lord," is displayed upon the battlements. But is the battle over? Oh no, the sinner has retired to the dungeon, in the center of the castle. And now he changes his tactics. "I cannot save myself," he says, "therefore I will despair; there is no salvation for me." Now this second castle is as hard to take as the first, for the sinner sits down and says, "I can't be saved, I must perish." But God commands the soldiers to take this castle too, shouting, "Salvation is of the Lord." Though it is not of man, *it is of God.* "He is able to save, even to the uttermost," though you cannot save yourself. This sword, you see, cuts two ways. It cuts pride down and then it cleaves the skull of despair. If any man says he can save himself, it

halves his pride at once! And if another man says he cannot be saved, it dashes his despair to the earth, for it affirms that he can be saved, seeing, "Salvation is of the Lord." That is the effect this doctrine has upon the sinner—may it have that effect on you!

But what influence has it upon the saint? Why, it is the keystone of all dignity. *I will defy you to be heterodox* if you believe this truth of God! You must be sound in the faith if you have learned to spell this sentence—"Salvation is of the Lord." And if you feel it in your soul, *you will not be proud*. You cannot be! You will cast everything at His feet, confessing that you have done nothing save what He has helped you to do and, therefore, the glory must be where the salvation is. If you believe this, you will not be distrustful. You will say, "My salvation does not depend on my faith, but on the Lord; my keeping does not depend on myself, but on God who keeps me; my being brought to heaven rests not now in my own hands, but in the hands of God! You will, when doubts and fears prevail, fold your arms, look upwards and say—

***"And now my eye of faith is dim,
I trust in Jesus, sink or swim."***

If you can keep this in your mind; *you may always be joyful*. He can have no cause for trouble who knows and feels that his salvation is of God! Come on, legions of hell. Come on, demons of the pit!—

***"He who has helped me bears me through,
And makes me more than conqueror, too."***

Salvation rests not on this poor arm, else I would despair, but on the arm of yonder omnipotent—that arm on which the pillars of the heavens do lean! "Whom should I fear? The Lord is my strength and my life—of whom shall I be afraid?"

And this may, by grace, *nerve you to work for God*. If you had to save your neighbors, you might sit down and do nothing. But since "Salvation is of the Lord," go on and prosper! Go and preach the gospel. Go and tell the gospel everywhere. Tell it in your house, tell it in the street, tell it in every land, and every nation—for it is not of *yourself*—it is "of the Lord." Why do not our friends go to Ireland to preach the gospel? Ireland is a disgrace to the Protestant church. Why do not they go and preach there? A year or so ago a number of our brave ministers went over there to preach. They did right bravely; they went there, and they came back again, and that is about the sum total of the glorious expedition against Popery! But why come back again? Because they were stoned! Good easy men! Do they not think that the gospel will ever spread without a few stones? But they could have been killed! Brave martyrs, they! Let them be enrolled in the red chronicle! Did the martyrs of old—did the apostles shrink from going to any country because they would have been killed? No, they were ready to die! And if half a dozen ministers had been killed

in Ireland, it would have been the finest thing in the world for liberty in the future—for after that, the people would dare not have touched us! The strong arm of the law would have put them down. We might have gone through every village of Ireland afterwards, and been at peace! The constables would soon have put an end to such infamous murder! It would have awakened the Protestantism of England to claim the liberty which is our right there, as we give it elsewhere! We shall never see any great change till we have some men in our ranks who are willing to be martyrs! That deep ditch can never be crossed till the bodies of a few of us shall fill it up—and after that it will be easy work to preach the gospel there! Our brothers should go there once more. They can leave their white cravats at home, and the white feather, too, and go forth with a brave heart and a bold spirit! And if the people mock and scoff, let them mock and scoff! George Whitefield said, when he preached on Kennington Common, where they threw dead cats and rotten eggs at him, “This is only the manure of Methodism—the best thing in the world to make it grow! Throw away as fast as you please!” And when a stone cut him on the forehead, he seemed to preach the better for a little blood-letting. Oh for such a man to dare the mob and then the mob would not need to be dared! Let us go there, remembering that, “Salvation is of the Lord,” and let us, in every place, and at every time, preach God’s Word, believing that God’s Word is more than a match for man’s sin, and God will yet be Master over all the earth!

My voice fails me again and my thoughts too. I was weary this morning when I came into this pulpit, and I am weary now. Sometimes I am joyous and glad, and feel in the pulpit as if I could preach forever; at other times I feel glad to close. But yet with such a text, I would that I could have finished up with all the might that mortal lips could summon! Oh, to let men know this, that their salvation is of God! Swearer, swear not against Him in whose hand your breath is! Despiser, despise not Him who can save you or destroy you! And you hypocrite, seek not to deceive Him from whom salvation comes, and who therefore knows right well whether your salvation has come from Him!

IV. And now, in concluding, let me just tell you WHAT IS THE OBVERSE OF THIS TRUTH. Salvation is of God—then *damnation is of man!* If any of you are damned, you will have no one to blame but yourselves. If any of you perish, the blame will not lie at God’s door. If you are lost and cast away, you will have to bear all the blame, and all the tortures of conscience, yourself—you will lie forever in hell and reflect, “I have destroyed myself; I have made a suicide of my soul; I have been my own destroyer. I can lay no blame to God.” Remember, if saved, you must be saved by God alone, though if lost you have lost yourselves. “Turn you, turn you, why will you die O house of Israel?” With my last faltering sen-

tence I bid you stop and think. Ah, my hearers! My hearers! It is an awful thing to preach to such a mass as this. But the other Sunday, as I came down the stairs, I was struck with a memorable sentence, uttered by one who stood there. He said, "There are 8,000 people this morning without excuse in the day of judgment." I should like to preach so that this always might be said! And if I cannot, O may God have mercy on me for His name's sake! But now remember! You have souls! Those souls will be damned, or saved! Which will it be? Damned forever they must be unless God shall save you; unless Christ shall have mercy upon you, there is no hope for you! Down on your knees! Cry to God for mercy! Now lift up your heart in prayer to God. May now be the very time when you shall be saved! Before the next drop of blood shall run through your veins, may you find peace! Remember, that peace is to be had NOW! If you now feel your need of it, it is to be had now! And how? For the mere asking for it! "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find."—

***"But if your ears refuse
The language of His grace,
Your hearts grow hard, like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race—
The Lord with vengeance drest,
Shall lift His hand and swear,
'You that despise My promised rest
Shall have no portion there.'"***

Oh that you may not be despisers, lest you "wonder and perish!" May you now fly to Christ, and be accepted in the beloved. It is my last best prayer. May the Lord hear it! Amen.

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CHRIST—THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD NO. 132

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 17, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”
1 Corinthians 1:24.*

UNBELIEF towards the gospel of Christ is the most unreasonable thing in the entire world because the reason which the unbeliever gives for his unbelief is fairly met by the character and constitution of the gospel of Christ. Notice that before this verse we read—“The Jews required a sign, the Greeks seek after wisdom.” If you met the Jew who believed not on Christ in the apostle’s day, he said, “I cannot believe, because I need a sign.” And if you had met the Greek, he would have said, “I cannot believe because I need a philosophic system, one that is full of wisdom.” “Now,” says the apostle, “both these objections are untenable and unreasonable! If you suppose that the Jew requires a sign, that sign is given him—Christ is the power of God! The miracles that Christ worked upon earth were signs more than sufficiently abundant, and if the Jewish people had but the will to believe, they would have found abundant signs and reasons for believing in the personal acts of Christ and His apostles.” And let the Greeks say, “I cannot believe because I require a wise system.” “O Greek, Christ is the wisdom of God! If you would but investigate the subject, you would find in it profoundness of wisdom—a depth where the most gigantic intellect might be drowned! It is no shallow gospel but a deep, and a great deep too; a deep which passes understanding. Your objection is ill-founded, for Christ is the wisdom of God, and His gospel is the highest of all sciences! If you wish to find wisdom, you must find it in the words of revelation.”

Now, this morning we shall try to bring out these two thoughts of the gospel. And it may be that God shall bless what we shall say to the removing of the objection of either Jew or Greek—that the one requiring a sign may see it in the *power* of God in Christ—and that he who requires wisdom may behold it in the *wisdom* of God in Christ! We shall understand our text in a three-fold manner—Christ, that is, *Christ personally*, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Christ, that is, *Christ’s gospel*, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Christ, that is,

Christ in the heart—true religion, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

I. First, to begin with CHRIST PERSONALLY. Christ considered as God and man, the Son of God equal with His Father and yet the man born of the Virgin Mary. Christ, in His complex person, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” *He is the power of God from all eternity.* “By His word were the heavens made and all the hosts of them.” “The word was God and the word was with God.” “All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.” The pillars of the earth were placed in their everlasting sockets by the omnipotent right hand of Christ! The curtains of the heavens were drawn upon their rings of starry light by Him who was from everlasting the All-glorious Son of God! The orbs that float aloft in ether—those ponderous planets and those mighty stars—were placed in their positions or sent rolling through space by the eternal strength of Him who is “the First and the Last,” “the Prince of the kings of the earth.” Christ is the power of God, for He is the Creator of all things and by Him all things exist!

But when He came to earth, took upon Himself the fashion of a man, tabernacled in the inn and slept in the manger, He still gave proof that He was the Son of God. Not so much so when, as an infant of a span long, the immortal was the mortal and the infinite became a babe. Not so much so in His youth, but afterwards when He began His public ministry; then He gave abundant proofs of His power and godhead. The winds hushed by His uplifted finger. The waves calmed by His voice so that they became solid as marble beneath His tread. The tempest cowered at His feet as before a conqueror that it knew and obeyed. These things, these stormy elements, the wind, the tempest and the water, gave full proof of His abundant power. The lame man leaping, the deaf man hearing, the dumb man singing, the dead rising—these, again, were proofs that He was the “power of God.” When the voice of Jesus startled the shades of hades and tore the bonds of death, with “Lazarus come forth!” And when the carcass, rotten in the tomb woke up to life, there was proof of His divine power and Godhead! He afforded a thousand other proofs. But we need not stay to mention them to you who have Bibles in your houses and who can read them every day. At last He yielded up His life and was buried in the tomb. Not long, however, did He sleep, for He gave another proof of His divine power and godhead when starting from His slumber, He frightened the guards with the majesty of His grandeur! Not being held by the bonds of death, they being like green withers before our conquering Samson, who had meanwhile pulled up the gates of hell, and carried them on his shoulders far away!

That He is the *power* of God, *now*. Scripture very positively affirms, for it is written, “He sits at the right hand of God.” He has the reins of provi-

dence gathered in His hands! The fleet coursers of time are driven by Him who sits in the chariot of the world and bids its wheels run round. And He shall bid them stay when it shall please Him. He is the great umpire of all disputes, the great Sovereign Head of the church, the Lord of heaven, and death, and hell! And by-and-by we know that He shall come—

**“On fiery clouds and wings of wind,
Appointed judge of all mankind,”**

and then the quickened dead, the startled myriads, the divided firmaments, the, “Depart you cursed,” and the, “Come, you blessed,” shall proclaim Him to be the power of God who has power over all flesh to save or to condemn as it pleases Him!

But He is equally “the *wisdom* of God.” The great things that He did *before all worlds* were proofs of His wisdom. He planned the way of salvation. He devised the system of atonement and substitution. He laid the foundations of the great plan of salvation. There was wisdom! He built the heavens by wisdom and He laid the pillars of light, whereon the firmament is balanced by His skill and wisdom. Mark the world! And learn, as you see all its multitudinous proofs of the wisdom of God, that there you have the wisdom of Christ, for He was the Creator of it! And *when He became a man*, He gave proofs enough of wisdom. Even in childhood, when He made the doctors sit abashed by the questions that He asked, He showed that He was more than mortal. And when Pharisee and Sadducee were all at last, defeated, and their nets were broken, He proved again the superlative wisdom of the Son of God! And when those who came to take Him stood enchained by His eloquence, spellbound by His marvelous oratory—there again was a proof that He was the wisdom of God, who could so enchain the minds of men. And now that He intercedes before the throne of God; now that He is our Advocate before the throne; the pledge and surety for the blessed; now that the reins of government are in His hands, and are ever wisely directed, we have abundant proofs that the wisdom of God is in Christ, as well as the power of God! Bow before Him, you that love Him! Bow before Him, you that desire Him! Crown Him, crown Him, crown Him! He is worthy of it—unto Him is everlasting might! Unto Him is unswerving wisdom—bless His name! Exalt Him. Clap your wings, you seraphs! Cry aloud, you cherubim! Shout, shout, shout to His praise, you ransomed hosts above! And you, oh men who know His grace—extol Him in your songs forever, for He is Christ—the power of God, and the wisdom of God!

II. But now Christ, that is, Christ’s GOSPEL, is the power and the wisdom of God!

1. Christ’s gospel is *a thing of divine power*. Do you need proofs of it? You shall not go far. How could Christ’s gospel have been established in

this world as it were, if it had not, in itself, intrinsic might? By whom was it spread? By mitred prelates; by learned doctors; by fierce warriors; by caliphs; by prophets? No—by fishermen, untaught, unlettered—save as the Spirit gave them utterance—not knowing how to preach or speak! How did they spread it? By the bayonet; by their swords; by the keen metal of their blades? Did they drive their gospel into men at the point of the lance, and with the scimitar? Say, did myriads rush to battle, as they did when they followed the crescent of Mohammed, and did they convert men by force, by law, by might? Ah, no! Nothing but their simple words, their unvarnished eloquence, their rough declamation, their unhewn oratory! These it were, which, by the blessing of God's Spirit, carried the gospel around the world within a century after the death of its founder!

But what was this gospel which achieved so much? Was it a thing palatable to human nature? Did it offer a Paradise of present happiness? Did it offer delight to the flesh and to the senses? Did it give charming prospects of wealth? Did it give licentious ideas to men? No! It was a gospel of most strict morality. It was a gospel with delights entirely *spiritual*—a gospel which renounced the flesh—which, unlike the coarse delusions of Joe Smith—cut off every prospect of men delighting themselves with the joys of lust! It was a holy gospel—spotless, clean as the breath of heaven! It was pure as the wings of angels! Not like that which spread of old, in the days of Mohammed—a gospel of lust and vice and wickedness—but pure—and consequently not palatable to human nature. And yet it spread! Why? My friends, I think the only answer I can give you is because it has in it the power of God!

But do you need another proof? How has it been maintained since then? No easy path has the gospel had. The good boat of the church has had to plow her way through seas of blood and those who have manned her have been bespattered with the bloody spray! Yes, they have had to man her and keep her in motion by laying down their lives unto the death! Mark the bitter persecution of the church of Christ from the time of Nero to the days of Mary and further on—through the days of Charles the Second, and of those kings of unhappy memory who had not as yet learned how to spell “toleration.” From the dragoons of Claverhouse, right straight away to the gladiatorial shows of Rome—what a long series of persecutions has the gospel had! But, as the old divines used to say, “The blood of the martyrs” has been “the seed of the Church.” It has been, as the old herbalists had it, like the herb, chamomile—the more it is trodden on, the more it grows—and the more the church has been ill-treated, the more has it prospered! Behold the mountains where the Albigenses walk in their white garments—see the stakes of Smithfield, not yet forgotten! Behold the fields among the towering hills where brave bands kept themselves free from despotic tyranny. Mark the Pilgrim Fa-

thers—driven by a government of persecution across the briny deep. See what vitality the gospel has. Plunge her under the wave, and she rises, the purer for her washing! Thrust her in the fire, and she comes out the brighter for her burning! Cut her in two, and each piece shall make another church. Behead her and like the Hydra of old, she shall have a hundred heads for every one you cut away! She cannot die; she must live, for she has the power of God within her!

Do you need another proof? I give you a better one than the last. I do not wonder that the church has outlived persecution as much as I wonder she has outlived the unfaithfulness of her professed teachers! Never was a church so abused as the church of Christ has been all through her history! From the days of Diotrefes who sought to have the pre-eminence, even to these latter times, we can read of proud arrogant prelates and pompous lords over God's inheritance. Bonners, Dunstons, and men of all sorts have come into her ranks and done all they could to kill her. And with their lordly priestcraft they have tried to turn her aside—and what shall we say to that huge apostasy of Rome? A thousand miracles that ever the church outlived that! When her pretended head had become apostate and all her bishops, disciples of hell—and she had gone far away—wonder of wonders that she should come out in the days of the glorious reformation and should still live! And even now, when I mark the inactivity of many of my brothers in the ministry—when I mark their utter and entire inefficiency for doing anything for God—when I see their waste of time, preaching now and then on the Sunday, instead of going to the highways and hedges, and preaching the gospel everywhere to the poor! When I see the need of unction in the church, itself, the need of prayerfulness—when I see wars and fights, factions and disunions—when I see hot blood and pride even in the meeting of the saints, I say it is a thousand, thousand miracles that the church of God should be alive at all, after the unfaithfulness of her members, her ministers and her bishops! She has the power of God within her, or else she would have been destroyed, for she has got enough within her own loins to work her destruction!

“But,” one says, “you have not yet proven it is the power of God to my understanding.” Sir, I will give you another proof. There are not a few of you who are now present who would be ready, I know, if it were necessary, to rise in your seats and bear me witness that I speak the truth. There are some who, not many months ago, were drunks; some who were wicked—men who were unfaithful to every vow which would keep a man to truth, and right, and chastity, and honesty and integrity. Yes, I repeat, I have some here who look back to a life of detestable sin! You tell me, some of you, that for 30 years even, (there is one such man present), and you never listened to a gospel ministry, nor ever entered the house of

God at all! You despised the Sabbath, you spent it in all kinds of evil pleasures; you plunged headlong into sin and vice, and your only wonder is that God had not cut you off long ago, as cumberers of the ground! And now you are here, as different as light from darkness! I know your characters and have watched you with a father's love, for, child though I am; I am the spiritual father of some here whose years outnumber mine by four times the number! And I have seen you honest, who were thieves—and you sober, who were drunkards. I have seen the wife's glad eyes sparkling with happiness! And many a woman has grasped me by the hand, shed her tears upon me, and said, "I bless God! I am a happy woman now. My husband is reclaimed, my house is blessed, and our children are brought up in the fear of the Lord." Not one or two, but scores of such are here! And, my friends, if these are not proofs that the gospel is the power of God, I say there is no proof of anything to be had in the world, and everything must be conjecture! Yes, and there worships with you this day, (and if there is a secularist here, my friend will pardon me for alluding to him for a moment)—there is in the house of God this day one who was a leader in your ranks, one who despised God, and ran very far away from right. And here he is! It is his honor, this day, to call himself a Christian! And I hope, when this sermon is ended, to grasp him by the hand, for he has done a valiant deed—he has bravely burned his papers in the sight of all the people, and has turned to God with full purpose of heart! I could give you proofs enough, if proofs were needed, that the gospel has been to men the power of God, and the wisdom of God! More proofs I could give, yes, thousands, one upon the other!

But we must notice the other points—Christ's gospel is the wisdom of God. Look at the gospel, itself, and you will see it to be wisdom. The man who scoffs and sneers at the gospel does so for no other reason but because he does not understand it. We have two of the richest books of theology still in existence that were written by professed infidels—by men that were so, I mean, before they wrote the books. You may have heard the story of Lords Lyttleton and West. I believe they determined to refute Christianity—one of them took up the subject of Paul's conversion and the other the subject of the resurrection. They sat down, both of them, to write books to ridicule those two events and the effect was that in studying the subject, they, both of them, became Christians and wrote books which are now bulwarks to the church they hoped to have overthrown! Every man who looks the gospel fairly in the face and gives it the study it ought to have will discover that it is no false gospel but a gospel that is replete with wisdom and full of the knowledge of Christ! If any man will mock the Bible—he must do it. There are some men who can find no wisdom, anywhere, except in their own heads. Such men, however, are not judges of wisdom! We would not set a mouse to explain the phenom-

ena of astronomy, nor would we set a man who is so foolish as to do nothing but argue, to understand the wisdom of the gospel. It needs that a man should at least be honest and have some share of sense, or we cannot dispute with him at all. Christ's gospel, to any man who believes it, is the wisdom of God!

Allow me to hint that to be a believer in the gospel is no dishonor to a man's intellect. While the gospel can be understood by the poorest and the most illiterate—while there are shallows in it where a lamb may wade—there *are* depths where leviathan may swim! The intellect of Locke found ample space in the gospel. The mind of Newton submitted to receive the truth of inspiration as a little child, and found a something in its majestic being higher than itself, unto which it could not attain. The rudest and most untaught have been enabled, by the study of the Holy Scripture of God's truth, to enter the kingdom of God! And the most learned have said of the gospel, it surpasses thought! I was thinking the other day what a vast amount of literature must be lost if the gospel is not true. No book was ever so suggestive as the Bible. We have large volumes in our library which it takes all our strength to lift, all upon Holy Scripture! Myriads upon myriads of smaller volumes—tens of thousands of every shape and size—all written upon the Bible! And I have thought that the very suggestiveness of Scripture, the supernatural suggestiveness of Holy Writ, may be in itself, a proof of its divine wisdom, since no man has ever been able to write a book which would have so many commentators and so many writers upon its text as the Bible has received, by so much as one millionth part!

III. CHRIST IN A MAN; THE GOSPEL IN THE SOUL, is the power of soul, and the wisdom of God. We will picture the Christian from his beginning to his end. We will give a short map of his history. He begins there, in that prison, with huge iron bars which he cannot file—in that dark damp cell where pestilence and death are bred. There, in poverty and nakedness, without a pitcher to put to his thirsty lips, without even a mouthful of dry crust to satisfy his hunger, that is where he begins—in the prison chamber of conviction, powerless, lost and ruined! Between the bars I thrust my hand to him and give him, in God's name, the name of Christ to plead. Look at him! He has been filing away at these bars many and many a day without their yielding an inch! But now he has got the name of Christ upon his lips. He puts his hand upon the bars and one of them is gone and another and another! And he makes a happy escape, crying, "I am free, I am free, I am free! Christ has been the power of God to me, in bringing me out of my trouble." No sooner is he free, however, than a thousand doubts meet him. This one cries, "You are not elect!" Others cry, "You are not redeemed!" Another says, "You are not called!" Another says, "You are not converted!" "Go away," he says, "go

away! Christ died.” And he just pleads the name of Christ as the power of God, and the doubts flee, and he walks straight on! He soon comes into the furnace of trouble. He is thrust into the innermost prison, and his feet are made fast in the stocks. God has put His hand upon him. He is in deep trouble. At midnight he begins to sing of Christ and lo, the walls begin to totter and the foundation of the prison to shake! And the man’s chains are taken off and he comes out free, for Christ has delivered him from trouble! Here is a hill to climb on the road to heaven. Wearily he pants up the side of that hill and thinks he must die before he can reach the summit. The name of Jesus is whispered in his ear—he leaps to his feet and pursues his way with fresh courage until the summit is gained, and he cries, “Jesus Christ is the strength of my song! He also has become my salvation!” Look at him again. He is, all of a sudden, beset by many enemies. How shall he resist them? With this true sword, this true Jerusalem blade, Christ and Him crucified! With this he keeps the devil at arm’s length. With this he fights against temptation, against lust, against spiritual wickedness in high places and with this he resists. Now, he has come to his last struggle—the river Death rolls black and sullen before him. Dark shapes rise upward from the flood and howl and frighten him. How shall he cross the stream? How shall he find a landing place on the other side? Dread thoughts perplex him for a moment. He is alarmed. But he remembers *Jesus* died. And catching up that watchword he ventures to the flood. Before his feet the Jordan flies apace—like Israel of old, he walks through, dry shod, singing as he goes to heaven—“Christ is with me! Christ is with me passing through the stream! Victory, victory, victory, to Him that loves me!”

To the Christian in his own experience, Christ is always the power of God. As for temptation, he can meet that with Christ. As for trouble he can endure that through Christ who strengthens him. Yes, he can say with Paul, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Have you ever seen a Christian in trouble, a true Christian? I have read a story of a man who was converted to God by seeing the conduct of his wife in the hour of trouble. They had a lovely child, their only offspring. The father’s heart perpetually doted on it and the mother’s soul was knit up in the heart of the little one. It lay sick upon its bed and the parents watered it night and day. At last it died. The father had no God—he tore his hair, he rolled upon the floor in misery, wallowed upon the earth, cursing his being and defying God in the utter casting down of his agony! There sat his wife, as fond of the child as ever he could be. And though tears would come, she gently said, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” “What?” he said, starting to his feet, “you love that child? I thought that when that child died you would break your heart. Here am I, a strong man. I am mad—here are you, a

weak woman and yet you are strong and bold. Tell me what it is that possesses you?" she said, "Christ is my Lord. I trust in Him. Surely I can give this child to Him who gave Himself for me." From that instant the man became a believer! "There must," he said, "be some truth and some power in the gospel which could lead you to believe in such a manner, under such a trial." Christians! Try to exhibit that spirit wherever you are and prove to the worldling that in your experience, at least, "Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God!"

And now the last point. In the *Christian's experience*, Christ is wisdom, as well as power. If you want to be a thoroughly learned man, the best place to begin is to begin at the Bible, to begin at Christ! It is said that even children learn to read more quickly from the Bible than from any other book! And this I am sure of—that we, who are but grown up children—will learn better and learn faster by beginning with Christ than we could by beginning with anything else. I remember saying once, and as I cannot say it better, I will repeat it, that before I knew the gospel, I gathered up a heterogeneous mass of all kinds of knowledge from here, there and everywhere. A bit of chemistry, a bit of botany and a bit of astronomy and a bit of this, that and the other. I put them all together in one great confused chaos. When I learned the gospel, I got a shelf in my head to put everything away just where it should be! It seemed to me as if when I had discovered Christ and Him crucified, I had got the center of the system so that I could see every other science revolving around in order! From the earth, you know, the planets appear to move in a very irregular manner—they are progressive, retrograde, stationary. But if you could get upon the sun, you would see them marching round in their constant, uniform, circular motion. So with knowledge! Begin with any other science you like and truth will seem to be awry. Begin with the science of Christ crucified, and you will begin with the sun—you will see every other science moving round it in complete harmony! The greatest mind in the world will be evolved by beginning at the right end. The old saying is, "Go from nature up to nature's God," but it is hard work going uphill! The best thing is to go from nature's God *down* to nature—and if you once get to nature's God and believe Him and love Him, it is surprising how easy it is to hear music in the waves and songs in the wild whisperings of the winds—to see God everywhere—in the stones, in the rocks, in the rippling brooks and hear Him everywhere—in the lowing of cattle, in the rolling of thunders and in the fury of tempests! Get Christ first. Put Him in the right place and you will find Him to be the wisdom of God in your own experience.

But wisdom is not knowledge; and we must not confuse the two. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge and Christ's gospel helps us by teaching us the right use of knowledge. It directs us. Yonder Christian has lost

his way in a dark forest, but God's word is a compass to him and a lantern, too. He finds his way by Christ! He comes to a turn in the road. Which is right and which is wrong? He cannot tell. Christ is the great signpost, telling him which way to go. He sees every day new straits—he knows not which way to steer. Christ is the great pilot who puts his hand on the tiller and makes him wise to steer through the shoals of temptation and the rocks of sin. Get the gospel and you are a wise man. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and right understandings have they who keep His commandments." Ah, Christian, you have had many doubts, but you have had them all solved when you have come to the cross of Christ! You have had many difficulties, but they have been all explained in the light of Calvary. You have seen mysteries, when you have brought them to the face of Christ, made clear and manifest which once you never could have known! But allow me to remark, here, that some people make use of Christ's gospel to illuminate their *heads*, instead of making use of it to illuminate their *hearts*. They are like the farmer Rowland Hill once described. The farmer is sitting by the fire with his children. The cat is purring on the hearth and they are all in great comfort. The plowman rushes in and cries, "Thieves! Thieves! Thieves!" The farmer rises up in a moment, grasps the candle, holds it up to his head, rushes after the thieves, and, says Rowland Hill, "he tumbles over a wheelbarrow, because he holds the light to his head, instead of holding it to his feet." So there are many who just hold religion up to illuminate their intellect, instead of holding it down to illuminate their practice—and so they make a sad tumble of it, and cast themselves into the mire and do more hurt to their Christian profession in one hour than they will ever be able to retrieve! Take care that you make the wisdom of God, by God's Holy Spirit, a thing of true wisdom, directing your feet into His statutes, and keeping you in His ways.

And now a practical appeal and we have done. I have been putting my arrow on the string. And if I have used many light similes, I have but done so just as the archer tips his arrow with a feather to make it fly the better. I know that a rough quaint saying often sticks, when another thing is entirely forgotten. Now let us draw the bow and send the arrow right at your hearts. Brethren, how many of you have felt in yourselves that Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God? Internal evidence is the best evidence in the world for the truth of the gospel! No Paley or Butler can prove the truth of the gospel as well as Mary, the servant girl yonder, who has got the gospel in her heart, and the power of it manifest in her life! Has Christ ever broken your bonds and set you free? Has He delivered you from your evil life and from your sin? Has He given you "a good hope through grace" and can you now say, "On Him I lean. On my beloved I stay myself"? If so, go away and rejoice—you are a

saint—for the apostle has said, “He is unto us who are saved, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” But if you cannot say this, allow me to affectionately warn you. If you need not this power of Christ and this wisdom of Christ now, you will need them in a few short moments when God shall come to judge the quick and the dead—when you shall stand before His bar, and when all the deeds that you have done shall be read before an assembled world. You will need religion then! Oh that you had grace to tremble now—grace to “kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” Hear how to be saved and I have done. Do you feel that you are a sinner? Are you conscious that you have rebelled against God? Are you willing to acknowledge your transgressions and do you hate and abhor them, while at the same time you feel you can do nothing to atone for them? Then hear this—Christ died for you! And if He died for you, you cannot be lost! Christ died in vain for no man for whom He died. If you are a penitent and a believer, He died for you, and you are safe. Go your way! Rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory, for He who has taught you your need of a Savior will give that Savior’s blood to be applied to your conscience, and you shall before long, with yonder blood-washed host, praise God and the Lamb saying, “Hallelujah, forever, Amen!” Only do you feel that you are a sinner? If not, I have no gospel to preach to you. I can but warn you. But if you feel your lost estate, and come to Christ, come and welcome, for He will never cast you away!

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CHRIST—THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD NO. 132

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 17, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”
1 Corinthians 1:24.*

UNBELIEF towards the gospel of Christ is the most unreasonable thing in the entire world because the reason which the unbeliever gives for his unbelief is fairly met by the character and constitution of the gospel of Christ. Notice that before this verse we read—“The Jews required a sign, the Greeks seek after wisdom.” If you met the Jew who believed not on Christ in the apostle’s day, he said, “I cannot believe, because I need a sign.” And if you had met the Greek, he would have said, “I cannot believe because I need a philosophic system, one that is full of wisdom.” “Now,” says the apostle, “both these objections are untenable and unreasonable! If you suppose that the Jew requires a sign, that sign is given him—Christ is the power of God! The miracles that Christ worked upon earth were signs more than sufficiently abundant, and if the Jewish people had but the will to believe, they would have found abundant signs and reasons for believing in the personal acts of Christ and His apostles.” And let the Greeks say, “I cannot believe because I require a wise system.” “O Greek, Christ is the wisdom of God! If you would but investigate the subject, you would find in it profoundness of wisdom—a depth where the most gigantic intellect might be drowned! It is no shallow gospel but a deep, and a great deep too; a deep which passes understanding. Your objection is ill-founded, for Christ is the wisdom of God, and His gospel is the highest of all sciences! If you wish to find wisdom, you must find it in the words of revelation.”

Now, this morning we shall try to bring out these two thoughts of the gospel. And it may be that God shall bless what we shall say to the removing of the objection of either Jew or Greek—that the one requiring a sign may see it in the *power* of God in Christ—and that he who requires wisdom may behold it in the *wisdom* of God in Christ! We shall understand our text in a three-fold manner—Christ, that is, *Christ personally*, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Christ, that is, *Christ’s gospel*, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Christ, that is,

Christ in the heart—true religion, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

I. First, to begin with CHRIST PERSONALLY. Christ considered as God and man, the Son of God equal with His Father and yet the man born of the Virgin Mary. Christ, in His complex person, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” *He is the power of God from all eternity.* “By His word were the heavens made and all the hosts of them.” “The word was God and the word was with God.” “All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.” The pillars of the earth were placed in their everlasting sockets by the omnipotent right hand of Christ! The curtains of the heavens were drawn upon their rings of starry light by Him who was from everlasting the All-glorious Son of God! The orbs that float aloft in ether—those ponderous planets and those mighty stars—were placed in their positions or sent rolling through space by the eternal strength of Him who is “the First and the Last,” “the Prince of the kings of the earth.” Christ is the power of God, for He is the Creator of all things and by Him all things exist!

But when He came to earth, took upon Himself the fashion of a man, tabernacled in the inn and slept in the manger, He still gave proof that He was the Son of God. Not so much so when, as an infant of a span long, the immortal was the mortal and the infinite became a babe. Not so much so in His youth, but afterwards when He began His public ministry; then He gave abundant proofs of His power and godhead. The winds hushed by His uplifted finger. The waves calmed by His voice so that they became solid as marble beneath His tread. The tempest cowered at His feet as before a conqueror that it knew and obeyed. These things, these stormy elements, the wind, the tempest and the water, gave full proof of His abundant power. The lame man leaping, the deaf man hearing, the dumb man singing, the dead rising—these, again, were proofs that He was the “power of God.” When the voice of Jesus startled the shades of hades and tore the bonds of death, with “Lazarus come forth!” And when the carcass, rotten in the tomb woke up to life, there was proof of His divine power and Godhead! He afforded a thousand other proofs. But we need not stay to mention them to you who have Bibles in your houses and who can read them every day. At last He yielded up His life and was buried in the tomb. Not long, however, did He sleep, for He gave another proof of His divine power and godhead when starting from His slumber, He frightened the guards with the majesty of His grandeur! Not being held by the bonds of death, they being like green withers before our conquering Samson, who had meanwhile pulled up the gates of hell, and carried them on his shoulders far away!

That He is the *power* of God, *now*. Scripture very positively affirms, for it is written, “He sits at the right hand of God.” He has the reins of provi-

dence gathered in His hands! The fleet coursers of time are driven by Him who sits in the chariot of the world and bids its wheels run round. And He shall bid them stay when it shall please Him. He is the great umpire of all disputes, the great Sovereign Head of the church, the Lord of heaven, and death, and hell! And by-and-by we know that He shall come—

**“On fiery clouds and wings of wind,
Appointed judge of all mankind,”**

and then the quickened dead, the startled myriads, the divided firmaments, the, “Depart you cursed,” and the, “Come, you blessed,” shall proclaim Him to be the power of God who has power over all flesh to save or to condemn as it pleases Him!

But He is equally “the *wisdom* of God.” The great things that He did *before all worlds* were proofs of His wisdom. He planned the way of salvation. He devised the system of atonement and substitution. He laid the foundations of the great plan of salvation. There was wisdom! He built the heavens by wisdom and He laid the pillars of light, whereon the firmament is balanced by His skill and wisdom. Mark the world! And learn, as you see all its multitudinous proofs of the wisdom of God, that there you have the wisdom of Christ, for He was the Creator of it! And *when He became a man*, He gave proofs enough of wisdom. Even in childhood, when He made the doctors sit abashed by the questions that He asked, He showed that He was more than mortal. And when Pharisee and Sadducee were all at last, defeated, and their nets were broken, He proved again the superlative wisdom of the Son of God! And when those who came to take Him stood enchained by His eloquence, spellbound by His marvelous oratory—there again was a proof that He was the wisdom of God, who could so enchain the minds of men. And now that He intercedes before the throne of God; now that He is our Advocate before the throne; the pledge and surety for the blessed; now that the reins of government are in His hands, and are ever wisely directed, we have abundant proofs that the wisdom of God is in Christ, as well as the power of God! Bow before Him, you that love Him! Bow before Him, you that desire Him! Crown Him, crown Him, crown Him! He is worthy of it—unto Him is everlasting might! Unto Him is unswerving wisdom—bless His name! Exalt Him. Clap your wings, you seraphs! Cry aloud, you cherubim! Shout, shout, shout to His praise, you ransomed hosts above! And you, oh men who know His grace—extol Him in your songs forever, for He is Christ—the power of God, and the wisdom of God!

II. But now Christ, that is, Christ’s GOSPEL, is the power and the wisdom of God!

1. Christ’s gospel is *a thing of divine power*. Do you need proofs of it? You shall not go far. How could Christ’s gospel have been established in

this world as it were, if it had not, in itself, intrinsic might? By whom was it spread? By mitred prelates; by learned doctors; by fierce warriors; by caliphs; by prophets? No—by fishermen, untaught, unlettered—save as the Spirit gave them utterance—not knowing how to preach or speak! How did they spread it? By the bayonet; by their swords; by the keen metal of their blades? Did they drive their gospel into men at the point of the lance, and with the scimitar? Say, did myriads rush to battle, as they did when they followed the crescent of Mohammed, and did they convert men by force, by law, by might? Ah, no! Nothing but their simple words, their unvarnished eloquence, their rough declamation, their unhewn oratory! These it were, which, by the blessing of God's Spirit, carried the gospel around the world within a century after the death of its founder!

But what was this gospel which achieved so much? Was it a thing palatable to human nature? Did it offer a Paradise of present happiness? Did it offer delight to the flesh and to the senses? Did it give charming prospects of wealth? Did it give licentious ideas to men? No! It was a gospel of most strict morality. It was a gospel with delights entirely *spiritual*—a gospel which renounced the flesh—which, unlike the coarse delusions of Joe Smith—cut off every prospect of men delighting themselves with the joys of lust! It was a holy gospel—spotless, clean as the breath of heaven! It was pure as the wings of angels! Not like that which spread of old, in the days of Mohammed—a gospel of lust and vice and wickedness—but pure—and consequently not palatable to human nature. And yet it spread! Why? My friends, I think the only answer I can give you is because it has in it the power of God!

But do you need another proof? How has it been maintained since then? No easy path has the gospel had. The good boat of the church has had to plow her way through seas of blood and those who have manned her have been bespattered with the bloody spray! Yes, they have had to man her and keep her in motion by laying down their lives unto the death! Mark the bitter persecution of the church of Christ from the time of Nero to the days of Mary and further on—through the days of Charles the Second, and of those kings of unhappy memory who had not as yet learned how to spell “toleration.” From the dragoons of Claverhouse, right straight away to the gladiatorial shows of Rome—what a long series of persecutions has the gospel had! But, as the old divines used to say, “The blood of the martyrs” has been “the seed of the Church.” It has been, as the old herbalists had it, like the herb, chamomile—the more it is trodden on, the more it grows—and the more the church has been ill-treated, the more has it prospered! Behold the mountains where the Albigenses walk in their white garments—see the stakes of Smithfield, not yet forgotten! Behold the fields among the towering hills where brave bands kept themselves free from despotic tyranny. Mark the Pilgrim Fa-

thers—driven by a government of persecution across the briny deep. See what vitality the gospel has. Plunge her under the wave, and she rises, the purer for her washing! Thrust her in the fire, and she comes out the brighter for her burning! Cut her in two, and each piece shall make another church. Behead her and like the Hydra of old, she shall have a hundred heads for every one you cut away! She cannot die; she must live, for she has the power of God within her!

Do you need another proof? I give you a better one than the last. I do not wonder that the church has outlived persecution as much as I wonder she has outlived the unfaithfulness of her professed teachers! Never was a church so abused as the church of Christ has been all through her history! From the days of Diotrefes who sought to have the pre-eminence, even to these latter times, we can read of proud arrogant prelates and pompous lords over God's inheritance. Bonners, Dunstons, and men of all sorts have come into her ranks and done all they could to kill her. And with their lordly priestcraft they have tried to turn her aside—and what shall we say to that huge apostasy of Rome? A thousand miracles that ever the church outlived that! When her pretended head had become apostate and all her bishops, disciples of hell—and she had gone far away—wonder of wonders that she should come out in the days of the glorious reformation and should still live! And even now, when I mark the inactivity of many of my brothers in the ministry—when I mark their utter and entire inefficiency for doing anything for God—when I see their waste of time, preaching now and then on the Sunday, instead of going to the highways and hedges, and preaching the gospel everywhere to the poor! When I see the need of unction in the church, itself, the need of prayerfulness—when I see wars and fights, factions and disunions—when I see hot blood and pride even in the meeting of the saints, I say it is a thousand, thousand miracles that the church of God should be alive at all, after the unfaithfulness of her members, her ministers and her bishops! She has the power of God within her, or else she would have been destroyed, for she has got enough within her own loins to work her destruction!

“But,” one says, “you have not yet proven it is the power of God to my understanding.” Sir, I will give you another proof. There are not a few of you who are now present who would be ready, I know, if it were necessary, to rise in your seats and bear me witness that I speak the truth. There are some who, not many months ago, were drunks; some who were wicked—men who were unfaithful to every vow which would keep a man to truth, and right, and chastity, and honesty and integrity. Yes, I repeat, I have some here who look back to a life of detestable sin! You tell me, some of you, that for 30 years even, (there is one such man present), and you never listened to a gospel ministry, nor ever entered the house of

God at all! You despised the Sabbath, you spent it in all kinds of evil pleasures; you plunged headlong into sin and vice, and your only wonder is that God had not cut you off long ago, as cumberers of the ground! And now you are here, as different as light from darkness! I know your characters and have watched you with a father's love, for, child though I am; I am the spiritual father of some here whose years outnumber mine by four times the number! And I have seen you honest, who were thieves—and you sober, who were drunkards. I have seen the wife's glad eyes sparkling with happiness! And many a woman has grasped me by the hand, shed her tears upon me, and said, "I bless God! I am a happy woman now. My husband is reclaimed, my house is blessed, and our children are brought up in the fear of the Lord." Not one or two, but scores of such are here! And, my friends, if these are not proofs that the gospel is the power of God, I say there is no proof of anything to be had in the world, and everything must be conjecture! Yes, and there worships with you this day, (and if there is a secularist here, my friend will pardon me for alluding to him for a moment)—there is in the house of God this day one who was a leader in your ranks, one who despised God, and ran very far away from right. And here he is! It is his honor, this day, to call himself a Christian! And I hope, when this sermon is ended, to grasp him by the hand, for he has done a valiant deed—he has bravely burned his papers in the sight of all the people, and has turned to God with full purpose of heart! I could give you proofs enough, if proofs were needed, that the gospel has been to men the power of God, and the wisdom of God! More proofs I could give, yes, thousands, one upon the other!

But we must notice the other points—Christ's gospel is the wisdom of God. Look at the gospel, itself, and you will see it to be wisdom. The man who scoffs and sneers at the gospel does so for no other reason but because he does not understand it. We have two of the richest books of theology still in existence that were written by professed infidels—by men that were so, I mean, before they wrote the books. You may have heard the story of Lords Lyttleton and West. I believe they determined to refute Christianity—one of them took up the subject of Paul's conversion and the other the subject of the resurrection. They sat down, both of them, to write books to ridicule those two events and the effect was that in studying the subject, they, both of them, became Christians and wrote books which are now bulwarks to the church they hoped to have overthrown! Every man who looks the gospel fairly in the face and gives it the study it ought to have will discover that it is no false gospel but a gospel that is replete with wisdom and full of the knowledge of Christ! If any man will mock the Bible—he must do it. There are some men who can find no wisdom, anywhere, except in their own heads. Such men, however, are not judges of wisdom! We would not set a mouse to explain the phenom-

ena of astronomy, nor would we set a man who is so foolish as to do nothing but argue, to understand the wisdom of the gospel. It needs that a man should at least be honest and have some share of sense, or we cannot dispute with him at all. Christ's gospel, to any man who believes it, is the wisdom of God!

Allow me to hint that to be a believer in the gospel is no dishonor to a man's intellect. While the gospel can be understood by the poorest and the most illiterate—while there are shallows in it where a lamb may wade—there *are* depths where leviathan may swim! The intellect of Locke found ample space in the gospel. The mind of Newton submitted to receive the truth of inspiration as a little child, and found a something in its majestic being higher than itself, unto which it could not attain. The rudest and most untaught have been enabled, by the study of the Holy Scripture of God's truth, to enter the kingdom of God! And the most learned have said of the gospel, it surpasses thought! I was thinking the other day what a vast amount of literature must be lost if the gospel is not true. No book was ever so suggestive as the Bible. We have large volumes in our library which it takes all our strength to lift, all upon Holy Scripture! Myriads upon myriads of smaller volumes—tens of thousands of every shape and size—all written upon the Bible! And I have thought that the very suggestiveness of Scripture, the supernatural suggestiveness of Holy Writ, may be in itself, a proof of its divine wisdom, since no man has ever been able to write a book which would have so many commentators and so many writers upon its text as the Bible has received, by so much as one millionth part!

III. CHRIST IN A MAN; THE GOSPEL IN THE SOUL, is the power of soul, and the wisdom of God. We will picture the Christian from his beginning to his end. We will give a short map of his history. He begins there, in that prison, with huge iron bars which he cannot file—in that dark damp cell where pestilence and death are bred. There, in poverty and nakedness, without a pitcher to put to his thirsty lips, without even a mouthful of dry crust to satisfy his hunger, that is where he begins—in the prison chamber of conviction, powerless, lost and ruined! Between the bars I thrust my hand to him and give him, in God's name, the name of Christ to plead. Look at him! He has been filing away at these bars many and many a day without their yielding an inch! But now he has got the name of Christ upon his lips. He puts his hand upon the bars and one of them is gone and another and another! And he makes a happy escape, crying, "I am free, I am free, I am free! Christ has been the power of God to me, in bringing me out of my trouble." No sooner is he free, however, than a thousand doubts meet him. This one cries, "You are not elect!" Others cry, "You are not redeemed!" Another says, "You are not called!" Another says, "You are not converted!" "Go away," he says, "go

away! Christ died.” And he just pleads the name of Christ as the power of God, and the doubts flee, and he walks straight on! He soon comes into the furnace of trouble. He is thrust into the innermost prison, and his feet are made fast in the stocks. God has put His hand upon him. He is in deep trouble. At midnight he begins to sing of Christ and lo, the walls begin to totter and the foundation of the prison to shake! And the man’s chains are taken off and he comes out free, for Christ has delivered him from trouble! Here is a hill to climb on the road to heaven. Wearily he pants up the side of that hill and thinks he must die before he can reach the summit. The name of Jesus is whispered in his ear—he leaps to his feet and pursues his way with fresh courage until the summit is gained, and he cries, “Jesus Christ is the strength of my song! He also has become my salvation!” Look at him again. He is, all of a sudden, beset by many enemies. How shall he resist them? With this true sword, this true Jerusalem blade, Christ and Him crucified! With this he keeps the devil at arm’s length. With this he fights against temptation, against lust, against spiritual wickedness in high places and with this he resists. Now, he has come to his last struggle—the river Death rolls black and sullen before him. Dark shapes rise upward from the flood and howl and frighten him. How shall he cross the stream? How shall he find a landing place on the other side? Dread thoughts perplex him for a moment. He is alarmed. But he remembers *Jesus* died. And catching up that watchword he ventures to the flood. Before his feet the Jordan flies apace—like Israel of old, he walks through, dry shod, singing as he goes to heaven—“Christ is with me! Christ is with me passing through the stream! Victory, victory, victory, to Him that loves me!”

To the Christian in his own experience, Christ is always the power of God. As for temptation, he can meet that with Christ. As for trouble he can endure that through Christ who strengthens him. Yes, he can say with Paul, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Have you ever seen a Christian in trouble, a true Christian? I have read a story of a man who was converted to God by seeing the conduct of his wife in the hour of trouble. They had a lovely child, their only offspring. The father’s heart perpetually doted on it and the mother’s soul was knit up in the heart of the little one. It lay sick upon its bed and the parents watered it night and day. At last it died. The father had no God—he tore his hair, he rolled upon the floor in misery, wallowed upon the earth, cursing his being and defying God in the utter casting down of his agony! There sat his wife, as fond of the child as ever he could be. And though tears would come, she gently said, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” “What?” he said, starting to his feet, “you love that child? I thought that when that child died you would break your heart. Here am I, a strong man. I am mad—here are you, a

weak woman and yet you are strong and bold. Tell me what it is that possesses you?" she said, "Christ is my Lord. I trust in Him. Surely I can give this child to Him who gave Himself for me." From that instant the man became a believer! "There must," he said, "be some truth and some power in the gospel which could lead you to believe in such a manner, under such a trial." Christians! Try to exhibit that spirit wherever you are and prove to the worldling that in your experience, at least, "Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God!"

And now the last point. In the *Christian's experience*, Christ is wisdom, as well as power. If you want to be a thoroughly learned man, the best place to begin is to begin at the Bible, to begin at Christ! It is said that even children learn to read more quickly from the Bible than from any other book! And this I am sure of—that we, who are but grown up children—will learn better and learn faster by beginning with Christ than we could by beginning with anything else. I remember saying once, and as I cannot say it better, I will repeat it, that before I knew the gospel, I gathered up a heterogeneous mass of all kinds of knowledge from here, there and everywhere. A bit of chemistry, a bit of botany and a bit of astronomy and a bit of this, that and the other. I put them all together in one great confused chaos. When I learned the gospel, I got a shelf in my head to put everything away just where it should be! It seemed to me as if when I had discovered Christ and Him crucified, I had got the center of the system so that I could see every other science revolving around in order! From the earth, you know, the planets appear to move in a very irregular manner—they are progressive, retrograde, stationary. But if you could get upon the sun, you would see them marching round in their constant, uniform, circular motion. So with knowledge! Begin with any other science you like and truth will seem to be awry. Begin with the science of Christ crucified, and you will begin with the sun—you will see every other science moving round it in complete harmony! The greatest mind in the world will be evolved by beginning at the right end. The old saying is, "Go from nature up to nature's God," but it is hard work going uphill! The best thing is to go from nature's God *down* to nature—and if you once get to nature's God and believe Him and love Him, it is surprising how easy it is to hear music in the waves and songs in the wild whisperings of the winds—to see God everywhere—in the stones, in the rocks, in the rippling brooks and hear Him everywhere—in the lowing of cattle, in the rolling of thunders and in the fury of tempests! Get Christ first. Put Him in the right place and you will find Him to be the wisdom of God in your own experience.

But wisdom is not knowledge; and we must not confuse the two. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge and Christ's gospel helps us by teaching us the right use of knowledge. It directs us. Yonder Christian has lost

his way in a dark forest, but God's word is a compass to him and a lantern, too. He finds his way by Christ! He comes to a turn in the road. Which is right and which is wrong? He cannot tell. Christ is the great signpost, telling him which way to go. He sees every day new straits—he knows not which way to steer. Christ is the great pilot who puts his hand on the tiller and makes him wise to steer through the shoals of temptation and the rocks of sin. Get the gospel and you are a wise man. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and right understandings have they who keep His commandments." Ah, Christian, you have had many doubts, but you have had them all solved when you have come to the cross of Christ! You have had many difficulties, but they have been all explained in the light of Calvary. You have seen mysteries, when you have brought them to the face of Christ, made clear and manifest which once you never could have known! But allow me to remark, here, that some people make use of Christ's gospel to illuminate their *heads*, instead of making use of it to illuminate their *hearts*. They are like the farmer Rowland Hill once described. The farmer is sitting by the fire with his children. The cat is purring on the hearth and they are all in great comfort. The plowman rushes in and cries, "Thieves! Thieves! Thieves!" The farmer rises up in a moment, grasps the candle, holds it up to his head, rushes after the thieves, and, says Rowland Hill, "he tumbles over a wheelbarrow, because he holds the light to his head, instead of holding it to his feet." So there are many who just hold religion up to illuminate their intellect, instead of holding it down to illuminate their practice—and so they make a sad tumble of it, and cast themselves into the mire and do more hurt to their Christian profession in one hour than they will ever be able to retrieve! Take care that you make the wisdom of God, by God's Holy Spirit, a thing of true wisdom, directing your feet into His statutes, and keeping you in His ways.

And now a practical appeal and we have done. I have been putting my arrow on the string. And if I have used many light similes, I have but done so just as the archer tips his arrow with a feather to make it fly the better. I know that a rough quaint saying often sticks, when another thing is entirely forgotten. Now let us draw the bow and send the arrow right at your hearts. Brethren, how many of you have felt in yourselves that Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God? Internal evidence is the best evidence in the world for the truth of the gospel! No Paley or Butler can prove the truth of the gospel as well as Mary, the servant girl yonder, who has got the gospel in her heart, and the power of it manifest in her life! Has Christ ever broken your bonds and set you free? Has He delivered you from your evil life and from your sin? Has He given you "a good hope through grace" and can you now say, "On Him I lean. On my beloved I stay myself"? If so, go away and rejoice—you are a

saint—for the apostle has said, “He is unto us who are saved, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” But if you cannot say this, allow me to affectionately warn you. If you need not this power of Christ and this wisdom of Christ now, you will need them in a few short moments when God shall come to judge the quick and the dead—when you shall stand before His bar, and when all the deeds that you have done shall be read before an assembled world. You will need religion then! Oh that you had grace to tremble now—grace to “kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” Hear how to be saved and I have done. Do you feel that you are a sinner? Are you conscious that you have rebelled against God? Are you willing to acknowledge your transgressions and do you hate and abhor them, while at the same time you feel you can do nothing to atone for them? Then hear this—Christ died for you! And if He died for you, you cannot be lost! Christ died in vain for no man for whom He died. If you are a penitent and a believer, He died for you, and you are safe. Go your way! Rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory, for He who has taught you your need of a Savior will give that Savior’s blood to be applied to your conscience, and you shall before long, with yonder blood-washed host, praise God and the Lamb saying, “Hallelujah, forever, Amen!” Only do you feel that you are a sinner? If not, I have no gospel to preach to you. I can but warn you. But if you feel your lost estate, and come to Christ, come and welcome, for He will never cast you away!

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HEAVENLY REST

NO. 133

A SERMON

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 24, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.”
Hebrews 4:9.*

THE apostle proved, in the former part of this and the latter part of the preceding chapter, that there was a rest promised in Scripture called the rest of God. He proved that Israel did not attain that rest—for God swore in His wrath, saying, “They shall not enter into My rest.” He proved that this did not merely refer to the rest of the land of Canaan, for he says that after they were in Canaan and David, himself, speaks again in later ages concerning the rest of God as a thing which was yet to come. Again he proves that “seeing those to whom it was promised did not enter in because of unbelief and it remains that some must enter in, therefore,” he says, “there remains a rest for the people of God.”

“My rest,” says God—the rest of God! Something more wonderful than any other kind of rest. In my text it is (in the original) called the *Sabbatism*—not the Sabbath but the rest of the Sabbath—not the outward ritual of the Sabbath, which was binding upon the Jew, but the inward spirit of the Sabbath, which is the joy and delight of the Christian. “There remains therefore”—because others have not had it, because some are *to* have it—“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.”

Now, this rest, I believe, is partly enjoyed on earth. “We who have believed do enter into rest,” for we have ceased from our own works, as God did from His. But the full fruition and rich enjoyment of it remains in the future and eternal state of the beatified on the other side the stream of death! Of that it shall be our delightful work to talk a little this morning. And oh, if God should help me to raise but one of his feeble saints on the wings of love to look within the veil and see the joys of the future, I shall be well content to have made the bells ring joyously in at least one heart—to have set one eye flashing with joy and to have made one spirit light with gladness! The rest of heaven! I shall first try to *exhibit it* and then, to *extol it*.

I. First, I shall try to EXHIBIT the rest of heaven; and in doing so I shall exhibit it, first, by way of contrast and then, by way of comparison.

1. To begin, then, I shall try to exhibit heaven *by way of contrast*. The rest of the righteous in glory is now to be contrasted with certain other things.

We will contrast it, first, *with the best estate of the worldling and the sinner*. The worldling has frequently a good estate. Sometimes his vats overflow, his barns are crammed, his heart is full of joy and gladness. There are periods with him when he flourishes like a green bay tree, when field is added to field and house to house, when he pulls down his barns and builds greater, when the river of his joy is full and the ocean of his life is at its flood with joy and blessedness! But ah, beloved, the state of the righteous in heaven is not for a moment to be compared with the joy of the sinner—it is so infinitely superior, so far surpassing it that it seems impossible that I should even try to set it in contrast! The worldling, when his corn and his wine are increased, has a glad eye and a joyous heart. But even then he has the direful thought that *he may soon leave his wealth*. He remembers that death may cut him down, that he must then leave all his fair riches behind him and sleep like the mean of the land in a narrow coffin—six feet of earth his only heritage. Not so the righteous man—he has obtained an inheritance which is “undefiled and that fades not away.” He knows that there is no possibility of his losing his joys—

**“He is securely blessed,
Has done with sin and care and woe,
And does with Jesus rest.”**

He has no dread of dissolution, no fear of the coffin or the shroud and, so far, the life of heaven is not worthy to be put in comparison with the life of the sinner! But the worldling, with all his joys, always has *a worm at the root* of them. You worshippers of pleasure! The blush upon your cheek is frequently but a painted deception! Ah, you sons and daughters of gaiety! The light feet of your dance is not in keeping with the heavy woe of your miserable spirits! Do you not confess that if by the excitement of company you, for a while forget the emptiness of your heart—yet silence and the hour of midnight and the waking watches of your bed bid you sometimes think that there must be something more blessed than the mere wanderings of gaiety in which you are now found? You are trying the world, some of you— then speak! Do you not find it empty? Might it not be said of the world, as an old philosopher said of it when he represented a man with it in his hands smiting it and listening to its ringing—“Touch it, touch it! Make it ring again. It is empty!” So it is with the world. You know it is so. And if you know it not as yet, the day is coming when, after you have plucked the sweets, you shall be pricked with the thorn and when you shall find that all is unsatisfactory that does not begin and end with God!

Not so the Christian in heaven. For him there are no nights. And if there are times of solitude and rest, he is always filled with ecstatic joy. His river always flows full of bliss without one pebble of sorrow over which it ripples. He has no aching conscience, no, “aching void the world can never fill.” He is supremely blessed, satisfied with favor and full with the goodness of the Lord! And you know, you worldlings, that your best estates often bring you great anxiety, *lest they should depart from you*. You are not yet so foolish as to conceive that riches endure forever! You men of business are frequently led to see that riches take to themselves wings and fly away. You have accumulated a fortune. But you find it is harder to retain than it is to get! You are seeking after a retirement, but you find that you grasp at shadows that flit away—that the everlasting trials of business and the constant changes of mankind are causes of prudent alarm to you! You fear that you shall lose your gods and that your gourd shall be eaten by the worm and fall down and your shadow shall be taken away. Not so the Christian! He lives in a house that can never decay. He wears a crown, the glitter of which shall never be dim! He has a garment which shall never wax old. He has bliss that never can depart from him, nor he from it. He is now firmly set like a pillar of marble in the temple of God. The world may rock, the tempest may sway it like the cradle of a child, but there, above the world, above the perpetual revolution of the stars, the Christian stands secure and immovable. His rest infinitely surpasses yours! Ah, you shall go to all the fabled luxuries of eastern monarchs and see their dainty couches and their luscious wines. Behold the riches of their pleasantries! How charming is the music that lulls them to sleep! How gently moves the fan that wafts them to their slumber! But ah—

***“I would not change my blessed estate
For all the world calls good or great!
And while my faith can keep her hold
I envy not the sinner’s gold!”***

I reckon that the richest, highest, noble condition of a worldly man is not worthy to be compared with the joy that is to be revealed hereafter in the breasts of those who are sanctified! O you spendthrift mortals who for one merry dance and a giddy life will lose a world of joys! O fools that catch at bubbles and lose realities! O ten thousand times mad men that grasp at shadows and lose the substance! What? Sirs, do you think a little round of pleasure, a few years of gaiety and merriment—just a little time of the tossing about, to and fro, of worldly business is a compensation for eternal ages of unfading bliss? Oh, how foolish will you conceive yourselves to be when you are in the next state! When cast away from heaven, you will see the saints blessed! I think I hear your mournful soliloquy, “Oh, how cheaply did I sell my soul! What a poor price did I get for all I have now lost! I have lost the palace and the crown and the joy

and bliss forever and am shut up in hell! And for what did I lose it? I lost it for the lascivious wanton kiss. I lost it for the merry drunken song. I lost it for just a few short years of pleasures, which, after all, were only painted pleasures!" Oh, I think I see you in your lost estates, cursing yourselves, pulling out your hair, that you should have sold heaven for mere change and have traded away eternal life for pitiful farthings which were spent quickly and which burned your hands in the spending of them! Oh, that you were wise, that you would weigh those things and reckon that a life of the greatest happiness, here, is nothing compared with the glorious hereafter—"There remains a rest for the people of God."

Now let me put it in *more pleasing contrast*. I shall contrast the rest of the believer above with the miserable estate of the believer sometimes here below. Christians have their sorrows. Suns have their spots. Skies have their clouds and Christians have their sorrows, too! But oh, how different will the state of the righteous be up there, from the state of the believer here! Here the Christian has to suffer anxiety. He is anxious to serve his Master, to do his best in his day and generation. His constant cry is—"Help me to serve You, O my God." And he looks out, day after day, with a strong desire for opportunities of doing good. Ah, if he is an active Christian, he will have much labor, much toil in endeavoring to serve his Master. And there will be times when he will say, "My soul is in haste to be gone. I am not wearied *of* the labor, I am wearied *in* it. To toil thus in the sun, though for a good Master, is not the thing that I desire just now." Ah, Christian, the day shall soon be over and you shall no longer have to toil. The sun is nearing the horizon. It shall rise again with a brighter day than you have ever seen before! There, up in heaven, Luther has no more to face a thundering Vatican. Paul has no more to run from city to city and continent to continent. There Baxter has no more to toil in his pulpit, to preach with a broken heart to hard-hearted sinners! There no longer has Knox to "cry aloud and spare not" against the immoralities of the false church. There no more shall be the strained lung and the tired throat and the aching eyes. No more shall the Sunday school teacher feel that his Sabbath is a day of joyful weariness. No more shall the tract distributor meet with rebuffs. No, there, those who have served their country and their God, those who have toiled for man's welfare with all their might shall enter into everlasting rest! Sheathed is the sword, the banner is furled, the fight is over, the victory won! And they rest from their labors!

Here, too, the Christian is always *sailing onward*. He is always in motion. He feels that he has not yet attained. Like Paul he can say, "Forgetting the things that are behind, I press forward to that which is before." But there his weary head shall be crowned with unfading light! There the ship that has been speeding onward shall furl its sails in the port of

eternal bliss. There he who, like an arrow, has sped his way shall be fixed forever in the target! There we who, like fleeting clouds were driven by every wind, shall gently distil in one perennial shower of everlasting joy! There is no progress, no motion there—they are at rest, they have attained the summit of the mountain, they have ascended to their God and our God! Higher they cannot go. They have reached the *Ultima Thule*, there are no fortunate islands beyond. This is life's utmost end of happiness! And they furl their sails, rest from their labors and enjoy themselves for sure. There is a difference between the progress of earth and the perfect peace of the rest of heaven! Here, too, the believer is often the subject of *doubt and fear*. "Am I His or am I not?" is often the cry. He trembles lest he should be deceived. At times he almost despairs and is inclined to not put his name down as one of the children of God. Dark insinuations are whispered into his ears. He thinks that God's mercy is clean gone forever and that He will not be mindful of him anymore! Again, his sins sometimes upbraid him and he thinks God will not have mercy on him. He has a poor fainting heart. He is like Ready-to-Halt—he has to go all his way on crutches. He has a poor feeble mind, always tumbling down over a straw and fearing one day he shall be drowned in a cart rut! Though the lions are chained, he is as much afraid of them as if they were loose! Hill Difficulty often frightens him. Going down into the Valley of Humiliation is often troublesome work for him. But there, there are no hills to climb, no dragons to fight, no foes to conquer, no dangers to dread. Ready-to-Halt, when he dies, will bury his crutches and Feeble-Mind will leave his feebleness behind him! Fearing will never fear again! Poor Doubting-Heart will learn to confidently believe! Oh, joy above all joys! The day is coming when I shall "know as I am known." When I shall not need to ask whether I am His or not, for encircled in His arms there shall be no room for doubt! Oh, Christian, you think there are slips between your lips and that cup of joy—but when you grasp the handle of that cup with your hand and are drinking draughts of ineffable delight—then you will have no doubt or fear—

***"There you shall see His face,
And never, never sin!
There from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in."***

Here, too, on earth, the Christian has to *suffer*. Here he has the aching head and the pained body. His limbs may be bruised or broken, disease may rack him with torture. He may be an afflicted one from his birth. He may have lost an eye or an ear or he may have lost many of his powers. Or if not, being of a weakly constitution he may have to spend the most of his days and nights upon the bed of weariness. Or if his body is sound, yet what suffering he has in his mind! Conflicts between depravity and gross temptations from the evil one; assaults of hell, perpetual at-

tacks of many kinds from the world, the flesh and the devil. But in heaven—no aching head, no weary heart! There, no palsied arms, no brow plowed with the furrows of old age! There the lost limb shall be recovered and old age shall find itself endowed with perpetual youth! There the infirmities of the flesh shall be left behind. There they shall flit, as on the wings of angels, from pole to pole and from place to place, without weariness or anguish. There they shall never need to lie upon the bed of rest, or the bed of suffering, for day without night, with unflagging joy, they shall circle God's throne rejoicing and always praise Him who has said, "The inhabitants there shall never be sick." There, too, they shall be free from *persecution*. Here Sicilian Vespers and St. Bartholomew and Smithfield are well-known words. But there shall be none to taunt them with a cruel word, or touch them with a cruel hand! There emperors and kings are not known and those who had power to torture them cease to be! They are in the society of saints. They shall be free from all the idle conversation of the wicked and from their cruel jeers set free forever. Set free from persecution! You army of martyrs—you were slain, you were torn asunder. You were cast to wild beasts, you wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins—destitute, afflicted and tormented. I see you now, a mighty host! The garments you wear are torn with thorns. Your faces are scarred with sufferings. I see you at your stakes and on your crosses. I hear your words of submission on your racks, I see you in your prisons, I behold you in your pillories—but—

***"Now you are arrayed in white,
Brighter than the noonday sun!
Fairest of the sons of light,
Nearest the eternal throne!"***

These are they, who "for their Master died, who love the cross and crown." They waded through seas of blood in order to obtain the inheritance! And there they are—with the blood-red crown of martyrdom about their heads—that ruby brightness, far excelling every other! Yes, there is no persecution there. "There remains a rest for the people of God."

Alas, in this mortal state the child of God is also subject to sin. Even *he* fails in his duty and wanders from his God. Even he does not walk in all the law of his God blameless, though he desires to do it. Sin now troubles him constantly. But there in glory sin is dead! There they have no temptation to sin, from without or from within—they are perfectly free to serve their Master. *Here* the child of God has sometimes to weep repenting of his backslidings. But *there* they never shed tears of penitence, for they never have cause to do so!

And last of all, here, the child of God has to wet the cold ashes of his relatives with *tears*. Here he has to bid adieu to all that is lovely and fair of mortal race. Here it is he hears, "Earth to earth and dust to dust and

ashes to ashes,” while the solemn music of the dust upon the coffin lid beats doleful time to those words. Here is the mother buried, the child snatched away, the husband torn from the bosom of a loving wife, the brother parted from the sister. The plate upon the coffin, the last coat of arms of earth—earth’s last emblems are here always before our eyes. But there never once shall be heard the toll of the funeral bell! No hearse with plumes has ever darkened the streets of gold, no emblems of sorrow have ever intruded into the homes of the immortal! They are strangers to the meaning of death. They cannot die—they live forever, having no power to decay and no possibility of corruption. Oh, rest of the righteous, how blessed are you, where families shall again be bound up in one bundle, where parted friends shall again meet to part no more and where the whole church of Christ united in one mighty circle shall together praise God and the Lamb throughout eternal ages!

Brothers and sisters, I have tried thus to set the rest of the righteous in the way of contrast. I feel I have failed. Poor are the words I can utter to tell you of immortal things! Even holy Baxter, himself, when he wrote of the “Saints’ rest,” paused and said—“But these are only tinklings compared with the full thunders of heaven.” I cannot tell you, dear friends, nor can mortal tell what God has prepared for them who love Him!

2. And now I shall try very briefly to exhibit this contrast *in the way of comparison*. The Christian has some rest here but nothing compared with the rest which is to come.

There is the *rest of the church*. When the believer joins the church of God and becomes united with them, he may expect to rest. The good old writer of the “*Pilgrim’s Progress*” said that when the weary pilgrims were once admitted to the house Beautiful, they were shown to sleep in a chamber called, “peace,” or, “rest.” The church member at the Lord’s table has a sweet enjoyment of rest in fellowship with the saints. But ah, up there the rest of church fellowship far surpasses anything that is known here; for there are no divisions there; no angry words at the church meetings; no harsh thoughts of one another; no bickering about doctrine; no fights about practice. There Baptist, and Presbyterian, and Independent, and Wesleyan, and Episcopalian serve the same Lord and, having been washed in the same blood, sing the same song and are all joined in one! There pastors and deacons never look coolly on each other. No haughty prelates there, no lofty-minded ministers there but all meek and lowly, all knit together in brotherhood! They have a rest which surpasses all the rest of the church on earth!

There is, again, a rest of *faith* which a Christian enjoys. A sweet rest. Many of us have known it. We have known what it is, when the billows of trouble have run high, to hide ourselves in the breast of Christ and feel secure! We have cast our anchor deep into the rocks of God’s promise.

We have gone to sleep in our chamber and have not feared the tempest. We have looked at tribulation and have smiled at it. We have looked at death himself, and have laughed him to scorn! Yes, in the midst of calumny, reproach, slander and contempt, we have said, "I shall not be moved, for God is on my side." But the rest up there is still better—more unruffled, sweeter, more perfectly calm, more enduring and more lasting than even the rest of faith!

And, again, the Christian sometimes has the blessed rest of *communion*. There are happy moments when he puts his head on the Savior's breast—when, like John, he feels that he is close to the Savior's heart and there he sleeps. "God gives His beloved sleep." Not the sleep of unconsciousness, but the sleep of joy! Happy, happy, happy are the dreams we have had on the couch of communion! Blessed have been the times, when, like the spouse in Solomon's song, we could say of Christ, "His left hand was under my head, and with His right hand did He embrace me."—

***"But sweeter still the fountainhead,
Though sweet may be the stream."***

When we shall have plunged into a very bath of joy, we shall have found the delights even of communion on earth to have been but the dipping of the finger in the cup! But the dipping of the bread in the dish, whereas heaven shall be the participation of the whole of the joy, and not the mere taste of it. Here we sometimes enter into the portico of happiness—there we shall go into the presence chamber of the King! Here we look over the hedge and see the flowers in heaven's garden—there we shall walk between the beds of bliss and pluck fresh flowers at each step! Here we just look and see the sunlight of heaven in the distance, like the lamps of the thousand-gated cities shining afar off—there we shall see them in all their blaze of splendor! Here we listen to the whisperings of heaven's melody, borne by winds from afar. But there, entranced, amidst the grand oratorio of the blessed, we shall join in the everlasting hallelujah to the great Messiah, the God, the I AM! Oh, again I say, do we not wish to mount aloft and fly away, to enter into the rest which remains for the people of God?

II. And now, yet more briefly and then we shall have done. I am to endeavor to EXTOL this rest, as I have tried to EXHIBIT it. I would extol this rest for many reasons. And oh, that I were eloquent, that I might extol it as it deserves! Oh, for the lips of an angel and the burning tongue of a cherub to now talk of the bliss of the sanctified and of the rest of God's people!

It is, first, a *perfect* rest. They are wholly at rest in heaven. Here rest is but partial. I hope in a little time to cease from everyday labors for a season—but then the head will think and the mind may be looking forward

to prospective labor. And while the body is still, the brain will yet be in motion. Here, on Sabbath days a vast multitude of you sit in God's house, but many of you are obliged to stand and rest but little except in your mind and even when the mind is at rest, the body is wearied with the toil of standing. You have a weary mile, perhaps many miles, to go to your homes on the Sabbath day. And let the Sabbatarian say what he will, you may work on the Sabbath day if you work for God! And this Sabbath day's work of going to the house of God is work for God and God accepts it. For yourselves you may not labor—God commands you to rest—but if you have to toil these three, these four, these five, these six miles—as many of you have done—I will not and I must not blame you! “The priests in the sanctuary profane the Sabbath and are blameless.” It is toil and labor, it is true, but it is for a good cause—for our Master! But there, my friends, the rest is perfect! The body there rests perpetually—the mind, too—always rests! Though the inhabitants are always busy, always serving God, yet they are never weary, never toil-worn, never fatigued. They never fling themselves upon their couches at the end of the day and cry, “Oh, when shall I be away from this land of toil?” They never stand up in the burning sunlight and wipe the hot sweat from their brow. They never rise from their bed in the morning, half refreshed, to go to laborious study. No, they are perfectly at rest, stretched on the couch of eternal joy! They know not the semblance of a tear! They have done with sin and care and woe and, with their Savior, they rest!

Again, it is a *seasonable* rest. How seasonable it will be for some of you! You sons of wealth, you know not the toils of the poor! The calloused-handed laborer, perhaps you have never seen and you know not how he has to tug and to toil! Among my congregation I have many of a class upon whom I have always looked with pity, poor women who must rise tomorrow morning with the sun and begin that everlasting, “stitch, stitch,” that works their fingers to the bone. And from Monday morning till Saturday night, many of you, my Members and multitudes of you, my hearers, will not be able to lay aside your needle and your thread, except when, tired and weary, you fall back on your chair and are lulled to sleep by your thoughts of labor! Oh, how seasonable will heaven's rest be to you! Oh, how glad will you be, when you get there, to find that there are no Monday mornings, no more toil for you—just rest, eternal rest! Others of you have hard manual labor to perform. You have reason to thank God that you are strong enough to do it and you are not ashamed of your work. For labor is an honor to a man. But still, there are times when you say, “I wish I were not so dragged to death by the business of London life.” We have but little rest in this huge city. Our day is longer and our work is harder than our friends in the country. You have sometimes sighed to go into the green fields for a breath of fresh air. You have

longed to hear the song of the sweet birds that used to wake you when you were lads. You miss the bright blue sky, the beautiful flowers and the thousand charms of a country life. And perhaps you will never get beyond this smoky city, but remember, when you get up *there*, “sweet fields arrayed in living green” and “rivers of delight” shall be the place where you shall rest! You shall have all the joys you can conceive of in that home of happiness! And though worn and weary you come to your grave—tottering on your staff—having journeyed through the wilderness of life like a weary camel which has only stopped on the Sabbath to sip its little water at the well, or to be baited at the oasis—*there* you will arrive at your journey’s end, laden with gold and spices and enter into the grand caravans of heaven and enjoy forever the things you have wearily carried with you while here!

And I must say that to others of us who have not to toil with our hands, heaven will be a seasonable rest. Those of us who have to tire our brain day after day will find it no slight benefit to have an everlasting rest above! I will not boast of what I do—there may be many who do more—there may be many who are perpetually and daily striving to serve God and are using their mind’s best energies in so doing. But this much I may say that almost every week I have the pleasure of preaching 12 times and often in my sleep do I think of what I shall say next time. Not having the advantage of laying out my seven shillings and sixpence in buying manuscripts, it costs me hard diligent labor to find even something to say! And I sometimes have a difficulty to keep the hopper full in the mill. I feel that if I had not, now and then, a rest, I would have no wheat for God’s children. Still it is on, on, on and on we must go! We hear the chariot wheels of God behind us and we dare not stop! We think that eternity is drawing near and we must go on. rest to us, now, is more than labor—we want to be at work! But oh, how seasonable it shall be, when to the minister it shall be said—

***“Servant of God, well done!
Rest from your loved employ.
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter your Master’s joy!”***

It will be seasonable rest. You that are weary with State cares and have to learn the ingratitude of men—you that have sought honors and have got them—you seek to do your best but your very independence of spirit is called servility, while your servility would have been praised! You who seek to honor God and not to honor men, who will not bind yourselves to parties, but seek in your own independent and honest judgment to serve your country and your God. You, I say, when God shall see fit to call you to Himself, will find it no small joy to have done with Parliaments, to have done with States and kingdoms and to have laid aside your honors

to receive honors more lasting among those who dwell forever before the throne of the Most High!

One thing, and then once more, and then farewell. This rest, my brothers and sisters, ought to be praised because it is *eternal*. Here my best joys bear, "mortal," on their brow. Here my fair flowers fade. Here my sweet cups have dregs and are soon empty. Here my sweetest birds must die and their melody must soon be hushed. Here my most pleasant days must have their nights. *Here* the flowings of my bliss must have their ebbs. Everything passes away but *there*, everything shall be immortal! The harp shall never rust, the crown never wither, the eyes never dim, the voice never falter, the heart never waver and the being wholly consolidated unto eternity! Happy day, happy day, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life and the mortal shall have put on immortality!

And then, lastly, this glorious rest is to be best of all commended for its *certainty*. "There remains a rest for the people of God." Doubting one, you have often said, "I fear I shall never enter heaven." Fear not! All the people of God shall enter there! There is no fear about it. I love the quaint saying of a dying man, who, in his country brogue, exclaimed, "I have no fear of going Home. I have sent all before me. God's finger is on the latch of my door and I am ready for Him to enter." "But," said one, "are you not afraid least you should miss your inheritance?" "No," he said, "no, there is one crown in heaven that the angel Gabriel could not wear. It will fit no head but mine. There is one throne in heaven that Paul the apostle could not fill. It was made for me and I shall have it! There is one dish at the banquet that I must eat, or else it will be untasted, for God has set it apart for me." O Christian, what a joyous thought! Your portion is secure! "There remains a rest." "But cannot I forfeit it?" No, it is entailed—if I am a child of God I shall not lose it. It is mine as securely as if I were there—

***"Come, Christian, mount to Pisgah's top
And view the landscape over."***

See that little river of death, glistening in the sunlight and across it do you see the pinnacles of the eternal city? Do you mark the pleasant suburbs and all the joyous inhabitants? Turn your eyes to that spot! Do you see where that ray of light is glancing? There is a little spot there—do you see it? That is *your* estate. That is **YOURS!** Oh, if you could fly across, you would see written upon it, "This remains for such a one, preserved for him, only. He shall be caught up and dwell forever with God." Poor doubting one—see your inheritance. It is yours! If you believe in the Lord Jesus, you are one of the Lord's people. If you have repented of sin, you are one of the Lord's people. If you have been renewed in heart, you are one of the Lord's people and there is a place for you, a crown for you, a harp for you! No one else shall have it but yourself, and you shall have it

before long. Just pardon me one moment if I beg of you to think of yourselves as being in heaven. Is it not a strange thing to think of—a poor clown in heaven? Think. How will you feel with your crown on your head? Weary matron, many years have rolled over you. How changed will be the scene when you are young again! Ah, toil-worn laborer, only think when you shall rest forever! Can you conceive it? Could you but think for a moment of yourself as being in heaven right now, what a strange surprise would seize you! You would not so as much say, “What? Are these streets of gold? What? Are these walls of jasper?” “What? Am I here? In white? Am I here, with a crown on my brow? Am I here singing, who was always groaning? What? I praise God who once cursed Him? What? I lift up my voice in His honor? Oh, precious blood that washed me clean! Oh, precious faith that set me free! Oh, precious Spirit that made me repent, else I had been cast away and been in hell! But oh, what wonders! Angels! I am surprised! I am enraptured! Wonder of wonders! Oh, gates of pearls, I long since heard of you! Oh, joys that never fade, I long since heard tell of you! But I am like the Queen of Sheba, the half has not yet been told me! Profusion, oh profusion of bliss!—Wonder of wonders!—Miracle of miracles! What a world I am in! And oh, that I am here, this is the greatest miracle of all!” And yet, ‘tis true, ‘tis true. And that is the glory of it. It is true! Come, worm, and prove it! Come, pall, come shroud, come and prove it! Then come wings of faith, come, leap like a seraph! Come, eternal ages, come and you shall prove that there are joys that the eyes have not seen, which the ears have not heard and which only God can reveal to us by His Spirit. Oh, my earnest prayer is that none of you may come short of this rest, but that you may enter into it and enjoy it forever and ever! God give you His great blessing, for Jesus sake! Amen.

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ELIJAH'S APPEAL TO THE UNDECIDED

NO. 134

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 31, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.”
1 Kings 18:21.

IT was a day to be remembered when the multitudes of Israel were assembled at the foot of Carmel and when the solitary prophet of the Lord came forth to defy the 450 priests of the false god. We might look upon that scene with the eyes of historical curiosity and we should find it rich with interest. Instead of doing so, however, we shall look upon it with the eye of attentive consideration and see whether we cannot learn from its teachings. We have upon that hill of Carmel and along the plain three kinds of persons. We have first the devoted servant of Jehovah, a solitary prophet. We have, on the other hand, the decided servants of the evil one, the 450 prophets of Baal. But the vast mass of that day belonged to a third class—they were those who had not fully determined whether to fully worship Jehovah, the God of their fathers, or Baal, the god of Jezebel. On the one hand their ancient traditions led them to fear Jehovah, but on the other hand, their interest at court led them to bow before Baal. Many of them, therefore, were secret and half-hearted followers of Jehovah while they were the public worshippers of Baal. The whole of them at this juncture were faltering between two opinions. Elijah does not address his sermon to the priests of Baal. He will have something to say to them, by-and-by—he will preach them horrible sermons in deeds of blood. Nor has he anything to say to those who are the thorough servants of Jehovah, for they are not there. But his discourse is directed to those who are faltering between two opinions.

Now, we have these three classes here this morning. We have, I hope, a very large number who are on Jehovah's side—who fear God and serve Him. We have a number who are on the side of the evil one—who make no profession of religion and do not observe even the outward symptoms of it. They are both inwardly and outwardly the servants of the evil one. But the great mass of my hearers belong to the third class—the waverers. Like empty clouds, they are driven here and there by the wind. Like

painted beauties, they lack the freshness of life—they have a name to live and are dead. Procrastinators, double-minded men, undecided persons, to you I speak this morning—“How long will you falter between two opinions?” If the question is answered by God’s Spirit in your hearts, may you be led to answer, “No longer, Lord, do I falter. But this day I decide for You and am Your servant forever!”

Let us proceed at once to the text. Instead of giving the divisions at the commencement, I will mention them one by one as I proceed.

I. First, you will note that *the prophet insisted upon the distinction which existed between the worship of Baal and the worship of Jehovah.* Most of the people who were before him thought that Jehovah was God and that Baal was God, too. For this reason the worship of both was quite consistent. The great mass of them did not wholly reject the God of their fathers, nor did they wholly bow before Baal. But as polytheists, believing in many gods, they thought both Gods might be worshipped and each of them have a share in their hearts. “No,” said the prophet when he began, “this will not do. These are two answers—you can never make them one! They are two contradictory things which cannot be combined. I tell you that instead of combining the two, which is impossible, you are faltering between the two, which makes a vast difference.” “I will build in my house,” said one of them, “an altar for Jehovah here and an altar for Baal there. I am of one opinion; I believe them both to be God.” “No, no,” said Elijah, “it cannot be so! They are *two* and must be two. These things are not one answer but two answers. No, you cannot unite them!” Have I not many here who say, “I am worldly but I am religious, too! I can go to the Music Hall to worship God on Sunday! I went to the derby the other day—I go, on the one hand, to the place where I can serve my lusts—I am to be met with in every dancing room of every description and yet at the same time I say my prayers most devoutly! May I not be a good churchman, or a right good dissenter and a man of the world, too? May I not, after all, hold with the hounds as well as run with the hare? May I not love God and serve the devil, too—take the pleasure of each of them and give my heart to neither?” We answer: Not so, they are two answers! You cannot do it, they are distinct and separate. Mark Anthony yoked two lions to his chariot, but there are two lions no man ever yoked together—the lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the pit of hell. These can never go together! Two opinions you may hold in politics, perhaps, but then you will be despised by everybody unless you are of one opinion or the other and act as an independent man. But two opinions in the matter of soul-religion you cannot hold. If God is God, serve Him and do it thoroughly! But if this world is your god, serve it and make no profession of

religion! If you are a worldling and think the things of the world the best, serve them—devote yourself to them, do not be kept back by conscience—spite your conscience and run into sin! But remember, if the Lord is your God, you cannot have Baal, too. You must have one thing or else the other! “No man can serve two *masters*.” If God is served, He will be a Master. And if the devil is served, it will not be long before he will be a master and, “you cannot serve two *masters*.” Oh, be wise and think not that the two can be mingled together! How many a respectable deacon thinks that he can be covetous and grasping in business and grind the faces of the poor and yet be a saint! Oh, liar to God and to man! He is no saint! He is the very chief of sinners! How many a very excellent woman who is received into church fellowship among the people of God and thinks herself one of the elect, is to be found full of wrath and bitterness—a slave of mischief and of sin—a tattler, a slanderer, a busybody, entering into other people's houses and turning everything like comfort out of the minds of those with whom she comes in contact! She is the servant of God and of the devil, too! No, my lady, this will never do. The two never can be served thoroughly. Serve your master, whoever he is. If you profess to be religious, be so thoroughly. If you make any profession to be a Christian, be one! But if you are no Christian, do not *pretend* to be. If you love the world, then love it but cast off the mask and do not be a hypocrite! The double-minded man is, of all men, the most despicable. He is the follower of Janus who wears two faces. He can look with one eye upon the (so-called) Christian world with great delight. He can give his subscription to the Tract Society, the Bible Society and the Missionary Society—but he has another eye over there with which he looks at the casino, the dance hall and other pleasures which I do not care to mention but which some of you may know more of than I wish to know!

Such a man, I say, is worse than the most reprobate of men in the opinion of anyone who knows how to judge. Not worse in his open character, but really worse because he is not honest enough to go through with what he professes. Tom Loker, in *Uncle Tom*, was pretty near the mark when he shut the mouth of Haley, the slaveholder, who professed religion, with the following common sense remark—“I can stand most any talk of yours but your pious talk—that kills me right up. After all, what's the odds between me and you? It is not that you care one bit more, or have a bit more feeling: its clean, sheer, dog meanness—wanting to cheat the devil and save your own skin. Don't I see through it? And your getting religious, as you call it, after all, is a deal too mean for me. Run up a bill with the devil all your life and then sneak out when pay-time comes.” And how many do the same every day in London, in

England, everywhere else? They try to serve both masters, but it cannot be! The two things cannot be reconciled. God and Mammon, Christ and Belial—these never can meet. There never can be an agreement between them—they never can be brought into unity and why should you seek to do it? *“Two opinions,”* said the prophet. He would not allow any of his hearers to profess to worship both. “No,” he said, “these are two opinions, and you are faltering between the two.”

II. In the second place, *the prophet calls those who have wavered to an account for the amount of time which they had consumed in making their choice.* Some of them might have replied, “We have not yet had an opportunity of judging between God and Baal. We have not yet had time enough to make up our minds.” But the prophet takes away that objection and he says, *“How long will you falter between two opinions? How long? For three and a half years not a drop of rain has fallen at the command of Jehovah. Is not that proof enough? You have been all this time, three and a half years, expecting, till I should come, Jehovah’s servant to give you rain. And yet, though you yourselves are starving, your cattle dead, your fields parched and your meadows covered with dust, like the very deserts—yet all this time of judgment and trial and affliction has not been enough for you to make up your minds? How long, then,”* he said, “will you falter between two opinions?”

I speak not, this morning, to the thoroughly worldly. With them I have nothing to do right now —another time I may address them. But I am now speaking to you who are seeking to serve God and to serve Satan. You who are trying to be Christian worldlings, trying to be members of that extraordinary corporation called the “religious world,” which is a thing that never had an existence except in title! You are endeavoring, if you can, to make up your mind which it shall be. You know you cannot serve both and you are now coming to the period when you are saying, “Which shall it be? Shall I go thoroughly into sin and revel in the pleasures of the earth, or become a servant of God?” Now, I say to *you* this morning, as the prophet did, *“How long will you falter?”* Some of you have been faltering until your hair has grown gray. The 60th year of some of you is drawing near. Is not 60 years long enough to make your choice? “How long will you falter?” Perhaps one of you may have tottered into this place, leaning on his staff and you have been undecided up till now. Your 80th year has come—you have been outwardly a religious character, but truly a worldling. You are still, up to this date, faltering, saying, “I know not on which side to be.” How long, sirs, in the name of reason, in the name of mortality, in the name of death, in the name of eternity, “How long will you falter between two opinions?” You middle-aged men said

when you were youths, "When we are out of our apprenticeship we will become religious. Let us sow our wild oats in our youth and let us then begin to be diligent servants of the Lord." Lo, you have come to middle age and are waiting till that quiet villa shall be built when you shall retire from business and *then you think* you will serve God! Sirs, you said the same when you came of age and when your business began to increase! I therefore solemnly demand of you, "How long will you falter between two opinions?" How much more time do you need? Oh, young man, you said in your early childhood, when a mother's prayer followed you, "I will seek God when I come to manhood," and you have passed that day—you are a man and more than that, and yet you are still faltering. "How long will you falter between two opinions?"

How many of you have been churchgoers and chapelgoers for years? You have been impressed, too, many a time. But you have wiped the tears from your eyes and have said, "I will seek God and turn to Him with full purpose of heart." And you are just now where you were! How many more sermons do you need? How many more Sundays must roll away wasted? How many warnings, how many sicknesses, how many tollings of the bell to warn you that you must die? How many graves must be dug for your family before you will be impressed? How many plagues and pestilences must ravage this city before you will turn to God in truth? "How long will you falter between two opinions?" Would God you could answer this question and not allow the sands of life to drop, drop, drop from the glass, saying, "When the next goes I will repent." And yet that next one finds you impenitent! You say, "When the glass is just so low, I will turn to God." No, sir, no! It will not answer for you to talk so, for you may find your glass empty before you thought it had begun to run low and you may find yourself in eternity when you did but think of repenting and turning to God! How long, you gray-heads, how long, you men of ripe years, how long, you youths and maidens, how long will you be in this undecided, unhappy state? "How long will you falter between two opinions?"

Thus we have brought you so far. We have noted that there are two opinions and we have asked you, how much time you need to decide. One would think the question would require very little time, if time were all. If the will were not biased to evil and contrary to good, it would require no more time than the decision of a man who has to choose a halter or life, wealth or poverty. And if we were wise, it would take no time at all! If we understood the things of God, we would not hesitate but say at once, "God is my God and that forever."

III. *But the prophet charges these people with the absurdity of their position.* Some of them said, "What? Prophet, may we not continue to falter between two opinions? We are not desperately irreligious, so we are better than the profane. Certainly we are not thoroughly pious but, at any rate, a little piety is better than none, and the mere profession of it keeps us decent—let us try both!" "Now," says the prophet, "how long will you falter?" Or, if you like to read it so, "How long *limp* you between two opinions?" (How long *wriggle* you between two opinions would be a good word if I might employ it!) He represents them as like a man whose legs are entirely out of joint—he first goes on one side and then on the other and cannot go far either way. I could not describe it without putting myself into a most ludicrous posture, "How long *limp* you between two opinions!" The prophet laughs at them, as it were. And is it not true that a man who is neither one thing, or another is in a most absurd position? Let him go among the worldlings! They laugh under their collars and say, "That is one of the Exeter Hall saints," or, "That is one of the elect." Let him go among the Christian people, those who are saints and they say, "How can a man can be so inconsistent? How can he can come in our midst one day and the next be found in such-and-such society, we cannot tell." I think even the devil, himself, must laugh in scorn at such a man! "There," he says, "I am everything that is bad. I do sometimes pretend to be an angel of light and put on that garb, but *you* excel me in every respect, for I do it to get something by it—but you get nothing at all by it! You do not have the pleasures of this world and you do not have the pleasures of religion, either. You have the fears of religion without its hopes! You are afraid to do wrong and yet you have no hope of heaven. You have the duties of religion without the joys. You have to do just as religious people do and yet there is no heart in the matter—you have to sit down and see the table all spread before you and then you have not power to eat a single morsel of the precious dainties of the gospel!"

It is just the same with the world. You dare not go into this or that mischief that brings joy to the wicked man's heart. You think of what society would say! We do not know what to make of you. I might describe you, if I might speak as the Americans do, but I will not. You are half one thing and half the other. You come into the society of the saints and try to talk as they talk—but you are like a man who has been taught French in some day school in England—he makes a strange sort of Frenchified English and Englishized French and everyone laughs at him! The English laugh at him for trying to do it, and the French laugh at him for failing in it! If you spoke your own language, if you just spoke out as a sinner—if you professed to be what you truly are—you would at least get the re-

spect of one side, but now you are rejected by one class and equally rejected by the other! You come into our midst, but we cannot receive you. You go among worldlings—they reject you, too! You are too good for them and too bad for us! Where are you to be put? If there were a purgatory, *that* would be the place for you—where you might be tossed on the one side into ice and on the other into the burning fire and that forever! But as there is no such place as purgatory and, as you are really a servant of Satan and not a child of God, take heed, take heed how long you stay in a position so absurdly ridiculous! At the day of judgment, wavering men will be the scoff and the laughter even of hell. The angels will look down in scorn upon the man who was ashamed to thoroughly acknowledge his Master, while hell itself will ring with laughter. When that grand hypocrite shall come there—that undecided man—they will say, “Aha, we had to drink the dregs but above them there were sweets, you have only the dregs! You dare not go into the riotous and boisterous mirth of our youthful days and now you have come here with us, to drink the same dregs—you have the punishment without the pleasure!” Oh, how foolish will even the damned call you, to think that you faltered between two opinions! “How long limp you, wriggle you, walk you in an absurd manner between two opinions?” In adopting either opinion, you would at least be consistent. But in trying to hold both—to seek to be both one and the other and not knowing which to decide upon—you are limping between two opinions. I think a good translation is a very different one from that of the authorized version—“How long hop you upon two sprays?” So the Hebrew has it. Like a bird, which perpetually flies from limb to limb, and is never still. If it keeps on doing this, it will never have a nest. And so with you. You keep leaping between two limbs, from one opinion to the other. And so between the two you get no rest for the sole of your feet, no peace, no joy, no comfort but you are just a poor miserable thing all your life long!

IV. We have brought you thus far, then. We have shown you the absurdity of this faltering. Now, very briefly, the next point in my text is this—the multitude who had worshipped Jehovah and Baal and who were now undecided, might reply, “*But how do you know that we do not believe that Jehovah is God. How do you know we are not decided in opinion?*” The prophet meets this objection by saying, “I know you are not decided in opinion because you are *not decided in practice*. If God is God, *follow Him*. If Baal, *follow him*. You are not decided in practice.” Men’s opinions are not such things as we imagine. It is generally said, nowadays, that all opinions are right and if a man shall honestly hold his convictions, he is, without doubt, right. Not so! Truth is not changed by our

opinions—a thing is either true or false of itself and it is neither made true nor false by our views of it. It is for us, therefore, to judge carefully and not to think that any opinion will do. Besides, opinions have influence upon the conduct and if a man has a wrong opinion, he will, most likely, in some way or other, have wrong conduct, for the two usually go together. “Now,” said Elijah, “that you are not the servants of God is quite evident, for you do not follow Him—that you are not thoroughly servants of Baal, either, is quite evident, for you do not follow him.” Now I address myself to you again. Many of you are not the servants of God, you do not follow Him. You follow Him a certain distance in the form, but not in the spirit. You follow Him on Sundays but what do you do on Mondays? You follow Him in religious company, in evangelical drawing rooms and so on, but what do you do in other society? You do not follow Him! And, on the other hand, you do not follow Baal. You go a little way with the world, but there is a place to which you dare not go—you are too respectable to sin as others sin—or to go the whole way of the world. You dare not go the utmost lengths of evil. “Now,” says the prophet, pricking them upon this—“if the Lord is God, follow Him. Let your conduct be consistent with your opinions. If you believe the Lord to be God, carry it out in your daily life. Be holy, be prayerful, trust in Christ, be faithful, be upright, be loving. Give your whole heart to God and follow Him. If Baal is God, then follow him. But do not pretend to follow the other.” Let your conduct back up your opinion. If you really think that the follies of this world are the best and believe that a fine fashionable life, a life of frivolity and gaiety, flying from flower to flower, getting honey from none, is the most desirable—carry it out! If you think the life of the debauched is so very desirable. If you think his end is to be much wished for, if you think his pleasures are right—follow them. Go the whole way with them! If you believe that to cheat in business is right, put it up over your door—“I sell trickery goods here.” Or if you do not say it to the public, tell your conscience, but do not deceive the public—do not call the people to prayers, when you are opening a “British Bank.” If you mean to be religious, follow out your determination thoroughly. But if you mean to be worldly, go the whole way with the world. Let your conduct follow out your opinions. Make your life tally with your profession. Carry out your opinions whatever they are. But you dare not. You are too cowardly to sin as others do, honestly before God’s sun. Your conscience will not let you do it! And yet you are just so fond of Satan that you dare not leave him wholly and become thoroughly the servants of God. Oh, let your character be like your profession—either keep up your profession, or give it up—do be one thing or the other!

V. And now the prophet cries, "If the Lord is God, follow Him. If Baal, then follow him," and in so doing *he states the ground of his practical claim*. Let your conduct be consistent with your opinions. There is another objection raised by the crowd. "Prophet," says one, "you come to demand a practical proof of our affection. You say, 'Follow God.' Now, if I believe God to be God and that is my opinion, I do not see what claim He has to my opinions." Now, mark how the prophet puts it—he says, "*If God is God, follow Him.*" The reason why I claim that you should follow out your opinion concerning God is that God is God—God has a claim upon you, as creatures, for your devout obedience. One person replies, "What profit would I have, if I served God thoroughly? Would I be more happy? Would I get on better in this world? Would I have more peace of mind?" No, no, that is a secondary consideration! The only question for you is, "If God is God, follow Him." Not if it is more advantageous to you, but, "*If God is God, follow Him.*" The secularist would plead for religion on the ground that religion might be the best for this world and best for the world to come. Not so with the prophet. He says, "I do not put it on that ground! I insist that it is your bounden duty, if you believe in God—simply because He is God—to serve Him and *obey* Him! I do not tell you it is for your advantage—it may be, I believe it is—but that I put aside from the question. I demand of you that you follow God if you believe Him to be *God*. If you do not think He is God. If you really think that the devil is god, then follow him—his pretended godhead shall be your plea and you shall be consistent. But if God is God, if He made you, I demand that you serve Him! If it is He who puts the breath into your nostrils, I demand that you obey Him! If God is really worthy of worship and you really think so, I demand that you either follow Him, or else deny that He is God at all." Now, professor, if you say that Christ's gospel is the gospel. If you believe in the divinity of the gospel and put your trust in Christ, I demand of you to follow out the gospel—not merely because it will be to your advantage, but because the gospel is divine! If you make a profession of being a child of God—if you are a believer and think and believe religion is the best and the service of God the most desirable—I do not come to plead with you because of any advantage you would get by being holy! It is on this ground that I put it—that the Lord is God. And if He is God, it is your business to serve Him! If His gospel is true and you believe it to be true, it is your duty to carry it out! If you say Christ is not the Son of God, carry out your Jewish or your infidel convictions and see whether it will end well. If you do not believe Christ to be the Son of God, if you are a Muslim, be consistent and carry out your Muslim convictions, and see whether it will end well. But, take heed, take heed! If,

however, you say God is God and Christ the Savior and the gospel true—I demand of you, only on this account—that you carry it out! What a strong plea some would think the prophet might have had, if he had said, “God is your father’s God, therefore follow Him!” But no, he did not come down to that. He said, “If God is God—I do not care whether He is your father’s God or not—follow Him.” “Why do you go to chapel?” says one, “and not to church?” “Because my father and grandfather were dissenters.” Ask a churchman why he attends the establishment and he will very often say, “Well, our family were always brought up that way. That is why I go.”

Now I think that the worst of all reasons for a particular religion is that of our being brought up in it! I never could see that at all. I have attended the house of God with my father and my grandfather. But I thought, when I read the Scriptures, that it was my business to judge for myself. I know that my father and my grandfather take little children in their arms and put drops of water on their faces and say they are baptized. I took up my Bible and I could not see anything about babies being baptized. I picked up a little Greek. And I could not discover that the word, “baptized,” meant to sprinkle. So I said to myself, “Suppose they were good men, they may be wrong. And though I love and revere them, yet it is no reason why I should imitate them!” And they counted me right, when they knew of my honest conviction. And it was quite right for me to act according to my conviction, for I consider the baptism of an unconscious infant is just as foolish as the baptism of a ship or a bell—there is as much Scripture for one as the other! And therefore I left them and became what I am today, a Baptist minister, so called, but I hope a great deal more a Christian than a Baptist! It is seldom I mention it. I only do so by way of illustration here. Many a one will go to chapel because his grandmother did. Well, she was a good old soul, but I do not see that she ought to influence your judgment. “That does not matter,” says one, “I do not like to leave the church of my fathers.” Nor do I; I would rather belong to the same denomination with my father; I would not willfully differ from any of my friends, or leave their sect and denomination.

But let *God* be above our *parents!* Though our parents are at the very top of our hearts and we love them and reverence them and in all other matters pay them strict obedience, yet, with regard to religion, to our own Master we stand or fall! And we claim to have the right of judging for ourselves as men and then we think it our duty, having judged, to carry out our convictions. Now I am not going to say, “If God is your mother’s God, serve Him.” Though that would be a very good argument with some of you. But with you waverers, the only plea I have is, “If God is God,

serve Him." If the gospel is right, believe it. If a religious life is right, carry it out. If not, give it up. I only put my argument on Elijah's plea—"If God is God, follow Him—but if Baal, then follow him."

VI. And now I make my appeal to the falterers and waverers, with some questions I pray the Lord to apply. Now I will put this question to them—"How long will you falter?" I will tell them. You will falter between two opinions, all of you who are undecided, *until God shall answer by fire*. Fire was not what these poor people wanted who were assembled there. When Elijah says that, "The God who answers by fire let Him be God," I fancy I hear some of them saying, "No! The God who answers by *water* let him be God. We need rain badly enough." "No," said Elijah, "if rain should come, you would say that it was the common course of providence. And that would not cause you to decide." I tell you, all the providences that befall you undecided ones will not cause you to decide! God may surround you with providences. He may surround you with frequent warnings from the deathbed of your fellows. But providences will never decide for you. It is not the God of rain but the God of fire that will do it! There are two ways in which you undecided ones will decide, by-and-by. You who are decided for God will need no decision. You who are decided for Satan will need no decision. You are on Satan's side and must dwell forever in eternal burning—but these undecided ones need something to help them decide and will have either one of two things. They will either have the fire of God's Spirit to decide for them, or else the fire of eternal judgment will decide for them. I may preach to you, my hearers—and all the ministers in the world may preach to you who are wavering—but you will never decide for God through the force of your own will! None of you, if left to your natural judgment, to the use of your own reason, will ever decide for God. You may decide for Him merely as an outward form, but not as an inward *spiritual* thing which should possess your heart as a Christian, as a believer in the doctrine of Effectual grace. I know that *none of you* will ever decide for God's gospel unless God decides for you! And I tell you that you must either be decided by the descent of the fire of His Spirit into your hearts, now, or else in the Day of Judgment. Oh, which shall it be? Oh, that the prayer might be put up by the thousand of lips that are here—"Lord, decide for me now by the fire of Your Spirit! Oh, let Your Spirit descend into my heart to burn up the bullock, that I may be a whole burnt offering to God! Lord, burn up the wood and the stones of my sin. Burn up the very dust of worldliness—ah, and lick up the water of my impiety which now lies in the trenches and my cold indifference, that seek to put out the sacrifice."—

***“O make this heart rejoice or ache—
Decide this doubt for me!
And if it is not broken, break
And heal it, if it be.
O sovereign grace, my heart subdue!
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive to my Lord
To sing the triumphs of His word!”***

And may it be that while I speak, the mighty Fire, unseen by men, and unfelt by the vast majority of you, shall descend into some hearts which have of old been dedicated to God, by His divine Election, which are now like altars broken down but which God, by His Free grace, will this day build up! Oh, I pray that that influence may enter into some hearts, that there may be some go out of this place, saying—

***“’Tis done, the great transaction’s done!
I am my Lord’s and He is mine!
He drew me and I followed on
Glad to obey the voice divine!”***

Now rest my undivided heart, fixed on this stable Center, rest! Oh, that many may say that! But remember, if it is not so, the day is coming—the day of wrath and anger when you shall be decided of God. When the firmament shall be lit up with lightning, when the earth shall roll with drunken terror, when the pillars of the universe shall shake and God shall sit in the person of His Son to judge the world in righteousness. You will not be undecided then, when, “Depart you cursed” or, “Come, you blessed,” shall be your doom. There will be no indecision then, when you shall meet Him with joy or else with terror—when, “Rocks hide me, mountains fall on me,” shall be your doleful shriek. Or else your joyful song shall be, “The Lord is come.” In *that* day you will be decided. But till then, unless the living fire of the Holy Spirit decides for you, you will go on faltering between two opinions. May God grant you His Holy Spirit, that you may turn unto Him and be saved!

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PRESUMPTUOUS SINS

NO. 135

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 7, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”
Psalm 19:13.

ALL sins are great sins but yet some sins are greater than others. Every sin has in it the very venom of rebellion and is full of the essential marrow of traitorous rejection of God. But there are some sins which have in them a greater development of the essential mischief of rebellion and which wear upon their faces more of the brazen pride which defies the Most High. It is wrong to suppose that because all sins will condemn us, that therefore one sin is *not* greater than another. The fact is, that while all transgression is a greatly grievous sinful thing, yet there are some transgressions which have a deeper shade of blackness and a more double scarlet dyed hue of criminality than others. Now the *presumptuous sins* of our text are the chief of all sins—they rank head and foremost in the list of iniquities. It is remarkable that though an atonement was provided under the Jewish law for every kind of sin, there was this one exception—“But the soul that sins presumptuously shall have no atonement, it shall be cut off from the midst of My people.” Under the Christian dispensation in the sacrifice of our blessed Lord, there is a great and precious atonement for presumptuous sins whereby sinners who have sinned in this manner are made clean. Yet without a doubt, presumptuous sinners dying without pardon must expect to receive a double portion of the wrath of God and a more dreadful manifestation of the unutterable anguish of the torment of eternal punishment in the Pit that is dug for the wicked.

I shall this morning, first of all, endeavor to *describe presumptuous sins*. Secondly, I shall try, if I can, to *show by some illustrations why the presumptuous sin is more heinous than any other*. And then thirdly, I shall try to *press this prayer upon your notice*—the prayer, mark you, of the holy man—the prayer of David—“Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”

I. First, then, WHAT IS A PRESUMPTUOUS SIN? Now I think there must be one of four things in a sin in order to make it presumptuous. It must either be a sin against light and knowledge, or a sin committed with deliberation, or a sin committed with a design of sinning merely for sinning’s sake, or else it must be a sin committed through hardihood,

from a man's rash confidence in his own strength. We will mark these points one by one.

1. A sin that is *committed willfully against manifest light and knowledge* is a presumptuous sin. A sin of ignorance is not presumptuous unless that ignorance is also willful, in which case the ignorance is, itself, a presumptuous sin. But when a man sins for lack of knowing better—for lack of knowing the law, for lack of instruction, reproof, advice and admonition, we say that his sin, so committed, does not partake to any great extent of the nature of a presumptuous sin. But when a man knows better and sins in the very teeth and face of his increased light and knowledge, then his sin deserves to be branded with this ignominious title of a presumptuous sin. Let me just dwell on this thought a moment. Conscience is often an inner light to men whereby they are warned of forbidden acts as being sinful. Then if I sin against conscience, though I have no greater light than conscience affords me, still my sin is presumptuous—because I have presumed to go against that voice of God in my heart—an enlightened conscience. You, young men, were once tempted, (and perhaps it was but yesterday), to commit a certain act. The very moment you were tempted, conscience said, “It is wrong, it is wrong”—it shouted *murder* in your heart and told you the deed you were about to commit was abominable in the sight of the Lord. Your fellow apprentice committed the same sin without the warning of conscience. In him it was guilt—guilt which needs to be washed away with the Savior's blood. But it was not such guilt in him as it was in you—because your conscience warned you! Your conscience told you of the danger, warned you of the punishment and yet you dared to go astray against God—and therefore you sinned presumptuously! You have sinned very grievously in having done so. When a man shall trespass on my ground, he shall be a trespasser though he has no warning. But if straight before his face there stands a warning and if he knowingly and willingly trespasses—then he is guilty of a presumptuous trespass and is to be so far punished accordingly. So you, if you had not known better. If your conscience had been less enlightened, you might have committed the deed with far less of the criminality which now attaches to you because you sinned against conscience and, consequently, sinned presumptuously.

But, oh how much greater is the sin when man not only has the light of conscience, but has also *the admonition of friends*, the advice of those who are wise and esteemed by him! If I have but one check—the check of my enlightened conscience—and I transgress against it, I am presumptuous! But if a mother with tearful eyes warns me of the consequence of my guilt and if a father with steady looks and with affectionate determined earnestness, tells me what will be the fate of my transgression—if friends who are dear to me—counsel me to avoid the way of the wicked and warn me what must be the inevitable result of continuing in it, then I am presumptuous and my act in that very proportion becomes more guilty! I would have been presumptuous for having sinned against the

light of nature, but I am more presumptuous, when added to that, I have the light of affectionate counsel and of kind advice! Therein I bring upon my head a double amount of divine wrath. And how much more is this the case when the transgressor has been gifted with what is usually called a religious education? In childhood he has been lighted to his bed by the lamps of the sanctuary, the name of Jesus was mingled with the hush of lullaby. The music of the sanctuary woke him like a hymn at morning. He has been rocked on the knees of piety and has sucked the breasts of godliness. He has been tutored and trained in the way he should go—how much more fearful, I say—is the guilt of such a man than that of those who have never had such training but have been left to follow their own wayward lusts and pleasures without the restraint of a holy education and the restraints of an enlightened conscience!

But, my friends, even this may become worse. A man sins yet more presumptuously *when he has had a most special warning from the voice of God against the sin*. “What do you mean?” you ask. Why, I mean this—you saw but yesterday a strong man in your neighborhood brought to the grave by sudden death. It is but a month ago that you heard the bell toll for one whom you once knew and loved, who procrastinated and procrastinated until he perished in procrastination! You have had strange things happen in your very street and the voice of God has been spoken loudly through the lips of death to you. Yes, and you have had warnings, too, in your own body. You have been sick with fever—you have been brought to the jaws of the grave and you have looked down into the bottomless vault of destruction! It is not long ago since you were given up. All said they might prepare a coffin for you, for your breath could not long be in your body. Then you turned your face to the wall and prayed—you vowed that if God would spare you, you would live a goodly life that you would repent of your sins—but to your own confusion you are now just what you were! Ah, let me tell you, your guilt is more grievous than that of any other man! You have sinned presumptuously in the very highest sense in which you could have done so! You have sinned against reproofs, but what is still worse, you have sinned against your own solemn oaths and covenants and against the promises that you made to God! He who plays with fire must be condemned as careless, but he who has been burned once and afterwards plays with the destroying element is worse than careless! And he who has been scorched in the flame and has had his locks all hot and crisp with the burning—if he again should rush headlong into fire—I say he is worse than careless, he is worse than presumptuous, he is mad! But I have some such here. They have had warnings so terrible that they should have known better. They have gone into lusts which have brought their bodies into darkness and, perhaps, they have crept up this day to this house and they dare not tell their neighbor who stands by their side what is the loathsomeness that even now breeds upon their frame! And yet they will go back to the same lusts! The fool will go again to the stocks, the sheep will lick the knife that is to slay him.

You will go on in your lust and in your sins, despite warnings, despite advice, until you perish in your guilt. How worse than children are grown-up men! The child who goes for a merry slide upon a pond, if he is told that the ice will not hold him, starts back frightened. Or if he daringly creeps upon it, how soon he leaves it if he hears but a crack upon the slender covering of the water! But you men have a conscience which tells you that your sins are vile and that they will be your ruin! You hear the crack of sin, as its thin sheet of pleasure gives way beneath your feet—yes, and some of you have seen your comrades sink in the flood and lost—and yet you go sliding on, worse than children, worse than mad are you, thus presumptuously to play with your own everlasting state! O my God, how terrible is the presumption of some! How fearful is presumption in any! Oh, that we might be enabled to cry, “Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”

2. I said, again, that another characteristic of a presumptuous sin was *deliberation*. A man, perhaps, may have a passionate spirit and in a moment of hot haste he may utter an angry word of which in a few short minutes he will sincerely repent. A man may have a temper so hot that the least provocation causes him at once to be full of wrath. But he may also have a temperament which has this benefit to balance it—that he very soon learns to forgive and cools in a moment. Now, such a man does not sin presumptuously—when suddenly overcome by anger—though without doubt there is presumption in his sin unless he strives to correct that passion and keep it down! A man, again, who is suddenly tempted and surprised into a sin which is not his habit, but which he commits through the force of some strong temptation, is guilty—but not guilty of presumption—because he was taken unaware in the net and caught in the snare. But there are other men who sin deliberately. There are some who can think of a lust for weeks beforehand and dote upon their darling crime with pleasure. They do, as it were, water the young seedling of lust until it grows to the maturity of desire and then they go and commit the crime! There are some to whom lust is not a passerby but a lodger at home. They receive it, they house it, they feast on it and when they sin, they sin deliberately—walk coolly to their lusts and in cold blood commit the act which another might haply do in hot and furious haste. Now, such a sin has in it a great extent of sinfulness—it is a sin of high presumption! To be carried away as by a whirlwind of passion in a moment is wrong, but to sit down and deliberately resolve upon revenge is cursed and diabolical. To sit down and deliberately fashion schemes of wickedness is heinous and I can find no other word to fitly express it. To deliberate carefully how the crime is to be done and Haman-like to build the gallows and set to work to destroy one’s neighbor—to get the pit dug that the friend may fall into it and be destroyed, to lay snares in secret, to plot wickedness upon one’s bed—this is a high pitch of presumptuous sin. May God forgive any of us, if we have been so far guilty!

Again, *when a man continues long in sin, and has time to deliberate about it*, that is also a proof that it is a presumptuous sin. He that sins once, being overtaken in a fault and then abhors the sin, has not sinned presumptuously. But he who transgresses today, tomorrow and the next day, week after week and year after year until he has piled up a heap of sins that are high as a mountain—such a man, I say, sins presumptuously. In a continued habit of sin there must be a deliberation to sin. There must be at least such a force and strength of mind as could not have come upon any man if his sin were but the hasty effect of sudden passion. Ah, take heed, you that are sod in sin, you that drink it down as the greedy ox drinks down water—you who run to your lust as the rivers run to the sea and you who go to your passions as the sow to her wallowing in the mire—take heed, your crimes are grievous and the hand of God shall soon fall terribly on your heads unless, by divine grace, it is granted to you to repent and turn to Him! Fearful must be your doom if God should condemn you for presumptuous sin. Oh, Lord, “Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”

3. Again—I said that a presumptuous sin must be *a matter of design* and have been committed with the intention of sin. If at your leisure at home you will turn to that passage in the Book of Numbers where it says there is no pardon for a presumptuous sin under the Jewish dispensation, you will find immediately afterward, a case recorded. A man went out on the Sabbath to gather sticks. He was taken in the act of Sabbath-breaking, and the law being very stringent under the Jewish dispensation, he was ordered at once to be put to death. Now the reason why he was put to death was not merely because he gathered sticks on the Sabbath, but because the law had just then been proclaimed, “In it you shall do no manner of work.” This man willfully, in order, as it were, to show that he despised God—to show that he did not care for God—without any necessity, without any hope of advantage—went straight out in the very teeth of the law to perform not an act which he kept in his own house, which might, perhaps, have been overlooked—but an act which brought shame upon the whole congregation because infidel-like, he dared to brazen it out before God! As much as to say, “I care not for God.” Has God just commanded, “You shall do no manner of work?” Here I am! I do not need sticks today. I do not need to work. Not for the sake of sticks, but with the design of showing that I despise God, I go out this day and gather sticks. “Now,” says one, “surely there are no people in the world who have ever done such a thing as this.” Yes, there are and there are such in the Surrey Music Hall this day! They have sinned against God, not merely for the pleasure of it, but because they would show their lack of reverence to God. That young man burned his Bible in the midst of his wicked companions—not because he hated his Bible, for he quivered and looked as pale as the ashes on the hearth when he was doing it. But he did it out of pure bravado, in order to show them, as he thought, that he really was far gone from anything like a profession of religion! That other

man is accustomed, sometimes, to stand by the wayside when the people are going to the house of God and he swears at them. Not because he delights in swearing, but because he will show that he is irreligious, that he is ungodly! How many an infidel has done the same—not because he had any pleasure in the thing, itself, but because out of the wickedness of his heart he would spite God! He desired, if it were possible, to let men know that though the sin, itself, was cheap enough, he was determined to do something which would be like spitting in the face of his Maker and despising God who created him! Now, such a sin is a masterpiece of iniquity! There is a pardon for such a one—there is a full pardon to those who are brought to repentance, but few of such men ever receive it. For when they are so far gone as to sin presumptuously just because they will do it—sin merely for the sake of showing their disregard of God and of God's law—we say of such, there is pardon for them, but it is wondrous divine grace which brings them into such a condition that they are willing to accept it. Oh that God would keep back His servants here from presumptuous sins! And if any of us here have committed them, may He bring us back to the praise of the glory of His grace!

4. But one more point and I think I shall have explained these presumptuous sins. A presumptuous sin is also one that is committed *through a hardihood of fancied strength of mind*. Says one, "Tomorrow I intend to go into such-and-such a society because I believe, though it hurts other people, it does not hurt me." You turn round and say to some young man, "I could not advise you to frequent the Casino—it would be your ruin." But you go yourself, sir? "Yes." But how do you justify yourself? "Because I have such strength of principle that I know just how far to go and no farther." You lie, sir. Against yourself you lie. You lie presumptuously in so doing! You are playing with bombshells that shall burst and destroy you! You are sitting over the mouth of hell with a fancy that you shall not be burned. You have gone to haunts of vice and come back tainted, very much tainted—but because you are so blind as not to see the taint, you think yourself secure! You are not so. Your sin, in daring to think that you are immune to sin, is a sin of presumption. "No, no," one says, "I know that I can go just so far in such-and-such a sin and there I can stop." Presumption, sir. Nothing but presumption! It would be presumption for any man to climb to the top of the spire of a church and stand upon his head. "Well, but he might come down safely, if he were skilled in it." Yes, but it is presumptuous! I would no more think of subscribing a farthing to a man's ascent in a balloon than I would to a poor wretch cutting his own throat! I would no more think of standing and gazing at any man who puts his life in a position of peril than I would of paying a man to blow his brains out! I think such things, if not murders, are murderous. There is suicide in men risking themselves in that way. And if there is suicide in the risk of the body, how much more in the case of a man who puts his own *soul* in jeopardy just because he thinks he has strength of mind enough to prevent its being

ruined and destroyed? Sir, your sin is a sin of presumption! It is a great and grievous one. It is one of the masterpieces of iniquity!

Oh, how many people there are who are sinning presumptuously today! You are sinning presumptuously in being today what you are. You are saying in a little time I will solemnly and seriously think of religion. In a few years, when I am a little more settled in life, I intend to turn over a new leaf and think about the matters of Godliness. Sir, you are presumptuous! You are presuming that you shall live—you are speculating upon a thing which is as frail as the bubble on the breaker! You are staking your everlasting soul on the deadly odds that you shall live for a few years—whereas, the probabilities are that you may be cut down before the sun shall set—and it is possible that before another year shall have passed over your head you may be in the land where repentance is impossible and useless were it possible! Oh, dear friends, procrastination is a presumptuous sin! The putting off of a thing which should be done today because you hope to live tomorrow, is a presumption! You have no right to do it—you are, in so doing, sinning against God and bringing on your heads the guilt of presumptuous sin. I remember that striking passage in Jonathan Edward's wonderful sermon which was the means of a great revival, where he says, "sinner, you are this moment standing over the mouth of hell upon a single plank and that plank is rotten! You are hanging over the jaws of perdition by a solitary rope, and the strands of that rope are now creaking." It is a terrible thing to be in such a position as that and yet to say, "Tomorrow," and to procrastinate. You remind me, some of you, of that story of Dionysus the tyrant, who, wishing to punish one who had displeased him, invited him to a noble feast. Rich were the foods that were spread upon the table and rare the wines of which he was invited to drink. A chair was placed at the head of the table and the guest was seated within it. Horror of horrors! The feast might be rich, but the guest was miserable, dreadful beyond thought! However splendid might be the array of the servants and however rich the dainties, yet he who had been invited sat there in agony. For what reason? Because over his head, immediately over it, there hung a sword, a furbished sword, suspended by a single hair! He had to sit all the time with this sword above him, with nothing but a hair between him and death! You may conceive the poor man's misery. He could not escape, he must sit where he was. How could he feast? How could he rejoice? But, oh my unconverted hearer, you are there this morning—with all your riches and your wealth before you, with the comforts of a home and the joys of a household (or with none of these if you are poor)—you are there this day, in a place from which you cannot escape! The sword of death is above you, prepared to descend. And woe unto you when it shall cleave your soul from your body! Can you yet make mirth and yet procrastinate? If you can, then verily your sin is presumptuous in a high degree. "Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins."

II. And now I come to the second part of the subject, with which I shall deal very briefly. I am to try and show you THERE IS GREAT ENORMITY IN A PRESUMPTUOUS SIN.

Let me take any one of the sins—for instance, *the sin against light and knowledge*. There is greater enormity in such a presumptuous sin than in any other. In this, our happy land, it is barely possible for a man to commit treason. I think it would be rather difficult for him to do it, for we are allowed to say words, here, which would bring our necks beneath the guillotine if they were spoken on the other side of the channel! And we are allowed to do deeds here which would bring us long years of imprisonment if the deed were done in any other land. We, despite all that our American friends may say, are the freest people to speak and think in the entire world! Though we have not the freedom of beating our slaves to death, or of shooting them if they choose to disobey; though we have not the freedom of hunting men, or the freedom of sucking another man's blood out of him to make us rich; though we have not the freedom of being worse than devils, which slave-catchers, and many slave-holders most certainly are—we have liberty greater than *that*—liberty against the tyrant mob, as well as against the tyrant king! But I suppose it is possible to commit treason here. If two men should commit treason—if one of them should tomorrow wantonly and wickedly raise the standard of revolt—if he should denounce the rightful sovereign of this land in the strongest and most abominable language; if he should seek to entice the loyal subjects of this country from their allegiance and should draw some of them astray to the hurt and injury of the commonwealth—even so, he might have in his rebellious ranks one who joined incautiously. That one, not knowing whereunto the matter might tend, might have come into the midst of the rebels not understanding the intention of their unlawful assembling. He might not even had known of the law which prohibited them from being banded together. I can suppose these two men brought up upon a charge of high treason—they have both, legally, been guilty of it. But I can suppose that the one man who had sinned ignorantly would be acquitted, because there was no malignant intent and I can suppose that the other men, who had willfully, knowingly, maliciously and wickedly raised the standard of revolt, would receive the highest punishment which the law could demand. And why? Because in the one case it was a sin of presumption, and in the other case it was not so. In the one case the man dared to defy the sovereign and defy the law of the land willfully—out of mere presumption! In the other case, not so. Now, every man sees that it would be just to make a distinction in the punishment because there is—conscience itself tells us—a distinction in the guilt!

Again—some men, I have said, sin *deliberately* and others do not do so. Now, in order to show that there is a distinction here, let me take a case. Tomorrow the bench of magistrates are sitting. Two men are brought up. They are, each of them, charged with stealing a loaf of bread. It is clearly proved in the one case that the man was hungry and that he

snatched the loaf of bread to satisfy his necessities. He is sorry for his deed. He grieves that he has done the act. But most manifestly he had a strong temptation to it. In the other case, the man was rich and he willfully went into the shop merely because he would break the law and show that he was a law-breaker. He said to the policeman outside, "Now, I care neither for you nor the law. I intend to go in there just to see what you can do with me." I can suppose the magistrate would say to one man, "You are discharged. Take care not to do the same again. Here is something for your present necessities—seek to earn an honest living." But to the other I can conceive him saying, "You are an infamous wretch! You have committed the same deed as the other, but from very different motives. I give you the longest term of imprisonment which the law allows me and I can only regret that I cannot treat you worse than I have done." The presumption of the sin made the difference. So when you sin deliberately and knowingly, your sin against Almighty God is a higher and a blacker sin than it would have been if you had sinned ignorantly, or sinned in haste.

Now let us suppose one more case. In the heat of some little dispute someone shall insult you. You shall be insulted by a man of angry temper. You have not provoked him, you gave him no just cause for it. But at the same time he was of a hot and angry disposition. He was somewhat foiled in the debate and he insulted you, calling you by some name which has left a stain upon your character, so far as epithets can do it. I can suppose that you would ask no reparation of him, if by tomorrow you saw that it was just a rash word spoken in haste, of which he repented. But suppose another person should waylay you in the street. Should week after week seek to meet you in the marketplace and should, after a great deal of toil and trouble, at last meet you. And there—in the middle of a number of people—unprovoked, just out of sheer, deliberate malice, come before you and call you a liar! I can suppose that Christian as you are, you might find it necessary to chastise such insolence, not with your hand but with the arm of that equitable law which protects us all from insulting violence. In the other case I can suppose it would be no trouble for you to forgive. You would say, "My dear fellow, I know we are all hasty, sometimes—there, now, I don't care at all for it, you did not mean it." But in this case, where a man has dared and defied you without any provocation whatever, you would say to him, "Sir, you have endeavored to injure me in respectable society. I can forgive you as a Christian, but as a man and a citizen, I shall demand that I am protected against your insolence."

You see, therefore, in the cases that occur between man and man, how there is an excess of guilt added to a sin by presumption! Oh, you that have sinned presumptuously—and who among us has not done so?—bow your heads in silence, confess your guilt, and then open your mouths and cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me, a presumptuous sinner."

III. And now I am nearly done—not to weary you by too long a discourse we shall notice THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THIS PRAYER—“Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins.”

Will you note that this prayer was the *prayer of a saint*; the prayer of a holy man of God? Did David need to pray thus? Did the “man after God’s own heart” need to cry, “Keep back Your servant”? Yes, he did; and note the *beauty* of the prayer. If I might translate it into more metaphorical style, it is like this, “Curb Your servant from presumptuous sin. Keep him back, or he will wander to the edge of the precipice of sin. Hold him in, Lord, he is apt to run away. Curb him. Put the bridle on him. Do not let him do it. Let Your overpowering grace keep him holy. When he would do evil, then draw him to good, and when his evil propensities would lead him astray, then check him. Check your servant from presumptuous sins!”

What, then? Is it true that the best of men may sin presumptuously? Ah, it is true. It is a solemn thing to find the apostle Paul warning saints against the most loathsome of sins. He says, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, inordinate affection,” and such like. What? Do saints need warning against such sins as these? Yes, they do. The highest saints may sin the lowest sins unless kept by divine grace. You old experienced Christians, even in your experience, may yet trip unless you cry, “Hold me up, Lord, and I shall be safe.” You whose love is fervent, whose faith is constant, whose hopes are bright, say not, “I shall never sin,” but rather cry out, “Lord, lead me not into temptation but when there, leave me not there, for unless You hold me fast, I feel I must, I shall, decline and prove an apostate after all.” There is enough tinder in the heart of the best men in the world to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell unless God should quench the sparks as they fall! There is enough corruption, depravity and wickedness in the heart of the most holy man that is now alive to damn his soul to all eternity—if free and sovereign grace does not prevent. O Christian, you have need to pray this prayer! But I think I hear you crying, “Is your servant a dog that I should do this thing?” So said Hazael, when the prophet told him that he would slay his master. But he went home and took a wet cloth and spread it over his master’s face and killed him—and he did, the next day, the sin which he abhorred the day before! Think it not enough to abhor sin—you may yet fall into it. Say not, “I never can be drunk, for I have such an abhorrence of drunkenness.” You may fall where you are most secure. Say not, “I can never blaspheme God, for I have never done so in my life.” Take care. You may yet swear most profanely. Job might have said, “I will never curse the day of my birth.” But he lived to do it! He was a patient man, he might have said, “I will never murmur, though He slay me yet will I trust in Him.” And yet he lived to wish that the day were darkness wherein he was brought forth. Boast not, then, O Christian, that you stand by faith. “Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.”

But if this needs to be the prayer of the best, how ought it to be the prayer of you and me? If the highest saint must pray it, O mere moralist, you have good need to utter it! And you who have begun to sin, who make no pretensions to piety—how much need is there for you to pray that you may be kept from presumptuously rebelling against God?

Instead, however, of enlarging upon that point, I shall close my few remarks this morning by just addressing myself most affectionately to such of you as are now under a sense of guilt by reason of presumptuous sins. God's Spirit has found some of you out this morning. I thought when I was describing presumptuous sin that I saw, here and there, an eye that was suffused with tears. I thought I saw here and there a head that was bowed down, as much as to say, "I am guilty there." I thought there were some hearts that palpitated with confession when I described the guilt of presumption. I hope it was so. If it were, I am glad of it. If I hit your consciences, it was what I meant to do. Not to your ears do I speak but to your hearts! I would not give the snap of my finger to gratify you with mere words of oratory, with a mere flow of language. No, God is my witness, I never sought effect yet, except the effect of hitting your consciences! I would use the words that would be most rough and vulgar in all our language if I could get at your heart better with them than with any other. If any of you feel, then, that you have presumed against God in sinning, let me just bid you look at your sin and weep over the blackness of it. Let me exhort you to go home and bow your heads with sorrow and confess your guilt and weep over it with many tears and sighs. You have greatly sinned and if God should blast you into perdition right now, He would be just! If now His fiery thunderbolt of vengeance should pierce you through—if the arrow that is now upon the string of the Almighty should find a target in your heart—He would be just. Go home and confess that—confess it with cries and sighs. And then what will you do next? Why, I bid you remember that there was a man who was God. That man suffered for presumptuous sin! I would bid you this day, sinner, if you know your need of a Savior, go up to your chamber, cast yourself upon your face and weep for sin. And when you have done that, turn to the Scriptures and read the story of that man who suffered and died for sin. See Him in all His unutterable agonies and griefs and woes and say—

***"My soul looks back to see
The burdens You did bear
When hanging on the accursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."***

Lift up your hand and put it on His head who bled and say—

***"My faith would lay its hand
On that dear head of Yours,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."***

Sit down at the foot of His cross and watch Him till your heart is moved, till the tears begin to flow again, until your heart breaks within you. And then you will rise and say—

***“Dissolved by His mercy, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”***

O sinner, you can never perish if you will cast yourself at the foot of the cross! If you seek to save yourself, you shall die. If you will come, just as you are—all black, all filthy, all hell-deserving, all ill-deserving—I am my Master’s hostage—I will be answerable at the day of judgment for this matter if He does not save you! I can preach on this subject now, for I trust I have tried my Master myself. As a youth I sinned, as a child I rebelled, as a young man I wandered into lusts and vanities—my Master made me feel how great a sinner I was and I sought to reform, to mend the matter, but I grew worse. At last I heard it said, “Look unto Me and be you saved all the ends of the earth.” And I looked to Jesus. And oh, my Savior, You have eased my aching conscience, You have given me peace, You have enabled me to say—

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

And oh, my heart pants for You! Oh that you who never knew Him could taste His love! Oh that you who have never repented might now receive the Holy Spirit who is able to melt the heart! And oh that you who are penitents would look to Him now! And I repeat that solemn assertion—I am God’s hostage this morning. You may feed me bread and water to my life’s end—yes, and I will bear the blame forever—if any of you seek Christ and Christ rejects you! It must not, it cannot be. “Whoever comes,” He says, “I will in nowise cast out.” “He is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him.” May God Almighty bless you, and may we meet again in yonder paradise! And there will we sing more sweetly of redeeming love and dying blood, and of Jesus’ power to save—

***“When this poor lisping, stammering tongue,
Lies silent in the grave.”***

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ISRAEL IN EGYPT

NO. 136

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 14, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Your ways, You King of saints.”
Revelation 15:3.

AT the outset, let us remark the carefulness of the Holy Spirit in guarding the honor of our blessed Lord. This verse is often quoted as if it runs thus—“They sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.” This mistake has led many weak minds to wonder at the expression, for they have imagined that it divided the honor of the song of heaven between Moses and the Redeemer. The clause—“the servant of God”—is doubtless inserted by the Holy Spirit to prevent any error upon this point and, therefore, it should be carefully included in the quotation. I take it that the song of Moses is here united with the song of the Lamb because the one was a type and picture of the other. The glorious overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea shadowed forth the total destruction of Satan and his entire host in the day of the great battle of the Lord. And there was in the song of Moses the expression of the same feelings of triumph which will pervade the breasts of the redeemed when they shall triumph with their Captain!

May God the Holy Spirit enable me to exhibit *the parallel which exists between the condition of Israel when passing through the sea, and the position of the church of Christ at the present day; next, we shall compare the triumph of the Lord at the Red Sea with the victory of the Lamb in the great and terrible day of the Lord; and lastly, I shall point out certain prominent features of the song of Moses which will doubtless be as prominent in the song of the Lamb.*

I. First, it is our business to regard THE POSITION OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL AS EMBLEMATICAL OF OUR OWN. And here we observe that like the church of God, the vast host of Israel had been delivered from bondage. We, my brothers and sisters, who constitute a part of the Israel of God, were once the slaves of sin and Satan. We served with hard bondage and rigor while in our natural state. No bondage was ever more terrible than ours. We indeed made bricks without straw and labored in the very fire. But by the strong hand of God we have been deliv-

ered! We have come forth from the prison. With joy we behold ourselves emancipated—the Lord’s free men! The iron yoke is taken from our necks. We no longer serve our lusts and pay obedience to the tyrant’s sin. With a high hand and an outstretched arm our God has led us forth from the place of our captivity and joyfully we pursue our way through the wilderness!

But with the children of Israel it was not all joy. They were free, but their master was at their heels. Pharaoh certainly did not want to lose so valuable a nation of servants! Therefore with his chosen captains, his horsemen and his chariots, he pursued them in angry haste. Frightened Israel beheld her infuriated oppressor close at her rear and trembled—the hearts of the people failed them while they saw their hopes blighted and their joys ended by the approach of the oppressor. Even so it is with some of you. You think you must be driven back again like dumb cattle into Egypt and once more become what you were. “Surely,” you say, “I cannot hold on my way with such a host seeking to drive me back! I must again become the slave of my iniquities.” And thus you are—dreading apostasy and feeling that you would rather die than become what you were. You are filled with trepidation this morning. You are saying, “Alas, for me! Better that I had died in Egypt than that I should have come out into this wilderness to be captured again.” You have tasted, for a moment, the joys of holiness and the sweets of liberty—and now to go back to endure the bondage of a spiritual Egypt would be worse than before! This is the position of the sacramental host of God’s elect. They have come out of Egypt and they are pursuing their way to Canaan. But the world is against them! The kings of the earth stand up and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His people, saying, “Let us scatter them. Let us utterly destroy them.” From the fiery days of the stakes of Smithfield even until now, the world’s black heart has hated the church and the world’s cruel hands and laughing lips have been forever against us! The host of the mighty are pursuing us and are thirsty for our blood and anxious to cut us off from the earth. Such is our position unto this hour and such must it be until we are landed on the other side of Jordan or until our Maker comes to reign on the earth!

But once more—the children of Israel were in a position more amazing than this. They came to the edge of the Red Sea. They feared their enemies behind them. They could not flee on either hand, for they were flanked by mountains and stupendous rocks. Only one course was open to them and that course was through the sea! God commands them to go forward. The rod of Moses is outstretched and the waters divide. A channel is left while the floods stand upright and the waters are congealed in the heart of the sea! The priests bearing the ark, march forward. The whole host of Israel follow. And now behold the wondrous pilgrimage! A

wall of alabaster is on either side and myriads are in the pebbly depths. Like a wall of glass, the sea stands on either side of them, frowning with cliffs of foam. But still on they march—and until the last of God’s Israel is safe—the water stands still and firm, frozen by the lips of God! Such, my hearers, is the position of God’s church now! You and I are marching through a sea, the floods of which are kept upright only by the sovereign power of God. This world is a world which is suddenly to be destroyed. And our position in it is just the position of the children of Israel, for whose sake the floods refused to meet until they were safely landed. O church of God! You are the salt of the earth—when you are removed, this earth must putrefy and decay! O living army of the living God! You, like Israel, keep the floods of providence still, standing fast. But when the last of you shall be gone from this stage of action, God’s fiery wrath and tremendous anger shall dash down upon the ground whereon you now are standing and your enemies shall be overwhelmed in the place through which you now walk safely. Let me put my thoughts as plainly as I can. Naturally, according to the common order, the Red Sea should have flowed on in a level and even manner, constant in its waves and unbroken in its surface. By the might of God, the Red Sea was divided into two parts and the floods stood back. Now mark. Naturally, according to the common course of justice, this world, which groans and travails until now, ought, if we only consider the wicked, to be utterly destroyed! The only reason why the Red Sea afforded a safe passage for the host was this—that Israel marched through it. And the only reason why this world stands and the only reason why it is not destroyed by fire, as it is to be at the last great day, is because God’s Israel are in it! But when once they shall have passed through, the parted floods shall meet their hands and embrace with eager joy to clasp the adverse host within their hands. The day is coming when this world shall reel to and stagger like a drunken man! Every Christian may say, with due reverence to God, “The world is dissolved. I bear up the pillars thereof.” Let all the Christians that are in this world die and the pillars of the earth would fall and like a wreck and a vision, all this universe of ours would pass away, never to be seen again! We are today, I say, passing through the floods with enemies behind, pursuing us who are going out of Egypt up to Canaan!

II. And now the TRIUMPH OF MOSES was a picture of the ultimate triumph of the Lamb. Moses sang a song unto the Lord by the sea of Egypt. If you will turn to Holy Scripture, you will find that my text was sung by the holy spirits who had been preserved from sin and from the contamination of the beast. And it is said that they sung this song upon “a sea of glass mingled with fire.” Now the song of Moses was sung by the side of a sea, which was glassy and still. For a little season the floods had been disturbed, divided, separated, congealed—but a few moments af-

terwards, when Israel had safely passed the flood—they became as glassy as ever, for the enemy had sunk to the bottom like a stone and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared. Is there ever a time, then, when this great sea of providence, which now stands parted to give a passage to God's saints shall become a level surface? Is there a day when the now divided dispensations of God which are kept from following out their legitimate tendency to do justice upon sin—when the two seas of justice shall commingle and the one sea of God's providence shall be "a sea of glass mingled with fire"? Yes, the day is drawing near when God's enemies shall no longer make it necessary for God's providence to be apparently disturbed to save His people—when the great designs of God shall be accomplished and, therefore, when the walls of water shall roll together, while in their inmost depths the everlasting burning fire shall still consume the wicked! Oh, the sea shall be calm upon the surface! The sea upon which God's people shall walk shall seem to be a sea that is clear, without a wave, without an impurity—while down in its hollow bosom, far beyond all mortal sight shall be the horrid depths where the wicked must forever dwell in the fire which is mingled with the glass!

Well, I now want to show you why it was that Moses triumphed and why it is that, by-and-by, we shall triumph. One reason why Moses sung his song was because all Israel was safe. They were all safely across the sea. Not a drop of spray fell from that solid wall until the last of God's Israel had safely planted his foot on the other side of the flood. That done, immediately the floods dissolved into their proper place, again, but not till then. Part of that song was, "You have led Your people like a flock through the wilderness." Now, in the last time, when Christ shall come upon earth, the great song will be—"Lord, You have saved Your people. You have led them all safely through the paths of providence and not one of them has fallen into the hands of the enemy." Oh, it is my strong belief that in heaven there shall not be a vacant throne. I rejoice that all who love the Lord below must at last attain to heaven. I do not believe, with some, that men may start on the road to heaven and be saved and yet fall by the hand of the enemy. God forbid, my friends—

***"All the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne,
Shall bless the conduct of His grace,
And make His glories known."***

Part of the triumph of heaven will be that there is not one throne that is unoccupied! As many as God has chosen; as many as Christ has redeemed; as many as the Spirit has called—as many as believe shall arrive safely across the stream! We are not all safely landed, yet—

***"Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."***

The vanguard of the army have already reached the shore. I see them yonder—

***“I greet the blood-sprinkled bands
Upon the eternal shore.”***

And you and I, my brothers and sisters, are marching through the depths! We are at this day following hard after Christ and walking through the wilderness! Let us be of good cheer—the rearguard shall soon be where the vanguard already is. The last of the chosen shall soon have landed. The last of God’s elect shall have crossed the sea and then shall be heard the song of triumph, when all are secure! But oh, if *one* were absent—oh, if *one* of His chosen family should be cast away—it would make an everlasting discord in the song of the redeemed and cut the strings of the harps of paradise! Then music could never be distilled from them again.

But, perhaps, the major part of the joy of Moses lay in the destruction of all the enemies of God. He looked upon his people the day before—

***“He looked upon his people,
And the tear was in his eye.
He looked upon the foeman
And his glance was stern and high.”***

And now today he looks upon his people and he says, “Blessed are you, O Israel, safely landed on the shore.” And he looks not upon the foeman, but upon the foeman’s tomb. He looks where the living were protected by the shield of God from all their enemies. And he sees—what? A mighty sepulcher of water! A mighty tomb in which were engulfed princes, monarchs, potentates. “The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.” Pharaoh’s chariots are drowned therein. And soon, my hearers, you and I shall do the same. I say that now we have to look abroad on hosts of enemies. What with the wild beasts of Rome, what with the antichrist of Mahomet, what with the thousands of idolatries and false gods, what with infidelity in all its myriad shapes—many are the enemies of God and mighty are the hosts of hell. Lo, you see them gathered together this day—horseman upon horseman, chariot upon chariot—gathered together against the Most High. I see the trembling church, fearing to be overthrown. I mark her leaders bending their knees in solemn prayer and crying, “Lord, save Your people and bless Your heritage!” But my eye looks through the future with telescopic glance and I see the happy period of the latter days when Christ shall reign triumphant! I shall ask them where is Babel? Where is Rome? Where is Mahomet? And the answer shall come—where? Why, they have sunk into the depths! They have sunk to the bottom as a stone! Down there the horrid fire devours them, for the sea of glass is mingled with the fire of judgment! Today I see a battlefield—the whole earth is torn by the hoofs of horses. There is the rumble of cannon and the roll of drum. “To arms! To arms!” both hosts

are shouting. But you wait awhile and you shall walk across this plain of battle and say, "See that colossal system of dead error? There lies another, all frozen in ghastly death, in motionless stupor. There lies infidelity. There sleeps secularism and the secularist. There lie those who defied God. I see all this vast host of rebels lying scattered upon the earth." "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! Jehovah has gotten unto Himself the victory and the last of His enemies are destroyed." Then shall be the time when shall be sung "the song of Moses and of the Lamb."

III. Now, turning to the song of Moses, I shall conclude my address to you by noticing some interesting particulars in the song which will doubtless have a place in the everlasting orchestra of the redeemed when they shall praise the Most High. Oh, my brothers and sisters! I could but wish that I had stood by the Red Sea to have heard that mighty shout and that tremendous roar of acclamation! I think one might well have borne a servitude in Egypt just to have stood in that mighty host who sung such mighty praise! Music has charms. But never had it such charms as it had that day when fair Miriam led the women and Moses led the men, like some mighty leader, keeping time with his hand. "Sing unto the Lord, for He has done gloriously." I think I see the scene. And I anticipate the greater day, when the song shall be sung again, "as the song of Moses and of the Lamb."

Now, just notice this song. In the 15th chapter of Exodus you find it and in many of the Psalms you will see it amplified. The first thing I would have you notice in it is that from beginning to end, it is *a praise of God* and of nobody else but God! Moses, you have said nothing of yourself! O great law-giver, mightiest of men, did not your hand grasp the mighty rod that split the sea—that burned its fair breast and left a scar for a while upon its bosom? Did not *you* lead the hosts of Israel? Did not *you* marshal their thousands for battle and like a mighty commander lead them through the depths? Is there not a word for *you*? Not one! The whole strain of the song is, "I will sing unto the Lord," from beginning to end! It is all praise of Jehovah. There is not one word about Moses, nor a single word in praise of the children of Israel. Dear friends, the last song in this world, the song of triumph, shall be full of God and of no one else! Here you praise the *instrument*. Today you look on this man and on that and you say, "Thank God for this minister and for this man." Today you say, "Blessed be God for Luther who shook the Vatican. Thank God for Whitefield who stirred up a slumbering church." But in *that* day you shall not sing of Luther, nor of Whitefield, nor of any of the mighty ones of God's hosts. Forgotten shall their names be for a season, even as the stars refuse to be seen when the sun appears. The song shall be unto Jehovah and Jehovah only! We shall not have a word to say for preachers

nor bishops—not a syllable to say for good men and true! The *whole song* from first to last shall be, “Unto Him who loved us and has washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

And next will you please note that this song celebrated something of the fierceness of the enemy? Do you observe how, when the songster describes the attack of Pharaoh, he says, “The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. My lust shall be satisfied upon them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.” A *song* is made out of the *wrath* of Pharaoh—and it shall be so at the last—the wrath of a man shall praise God! I believe the last song of the redeemed, when they shall ultimately triumph, will celebrate in heavenly stanzas the wrath of man overcome by God. Sometimes after great battles, monuments are raised to the memory of the fight—of what are they composed? They are composed of weapons of death and of instruments of war which have been taken from the enemy. Now to use that illustration as I think it may be properly used, the day is coming when fury and wrath and hatred and strife shall all be woven into a *song*. And the weapons of our enemies, when taken from them, shall serve to make monuments to the praise of God! Rail on, rail on, blasphemer! Smite on, smite on, tyrant! Lift your heavy hand, O despot—crush the truth of God, which yet you cannot crush! Knock from His head the crown—the crown that is far above your reach—poor puny impotent mortal as you are! Go on, go on! But all you do shall but increase His glories, for anything we care, we bid you still proceed with all your wrath and malice—though it shall be worse for you, it shall be more glorious for our Master! The greater your preparations for war, the more splendid shall be His triumphal chariot when He shall ride through the streets of heaven in pompous array. The more mighty your preparations for battle, the more rich the spoil which He shall divide with the strong. Oh, Christian, fear not the foe! Remember the harder his blows, the sweeter your song! The greater his wrath, the more splendid your triumph! The more he rages, the more shall Christ be honored in the day of His appearing! “They sung the song of Moses and the Lamb.”

And then will you note, in the next place, how they sang *the total overthrow* of the enemy. There is one expression in this song which ought to be and I believe is, when set to music, very frequently repeated. It is that part of the song, as recorded in the Psalms, where it is declared that the whole host of Pharaoh were utterly destroyed and there was not one of them left. When that great song was sung by the side of the Red Sea, there was, no doubt, a special emphasis laid upon that expression, “Not one.” I think I hear the hosts of Israel. When the words were known by them, they began and they proceeded thus—“There is *not one* of them left.” And then in various parts the words were repeated, “Not one, not

one.” And then the women with their sweet voices sang, “Not one, not one.” I believe that at the last, a part of our triumph will be the fact that there is not one left. We shall look abroad throughout the earth and see it all a level sea. And not one foeman pursuing us—“Not one, not one!” Raise yourself ever so high, O you deceiver, you cannot live, for not one shall escape! Lift your head ever so proudly, O despot, you cannot live, for not one shall escape! O heir of heaven, not one sin shall cross the Jordan after you! Not one shall pass the Red Sea to overtake you! And this shall be the summit of your triumph—“Not one, not one! Not one of them is left.”

Just let us note again and I will not detain you too long, lest I weary you. One part of the song of Moses consisted in praising the case with which God destroyed His enemies. “You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.” If *we* had gone to work to destroy the hosts of Pharaoh, what a multitude of engines of death should we have required! If the work had been committed to us, to cut off the hosts, what marvelous preparations, what thunder, what noise, what great activity there would have been! But mark the grandeur of the expression. God did not even lift Himself from His throne to do it—He saw Pharaoh coming. He seemed to look upon him with a placid smile. He just blew with His lips and the sea covered them! You and I will marvel at the last how easy it has been to overthrow the enemies of the Lord. We have been tugging and toiling all our lifetime to be the means of overthrowing systems of error—it will astonish the church when her Master shall come—to see how, as the grass dissolves before the fire, all error and sin shall be utterly destroyed in the coming of the Most High! We must have our societies and our machinery, our preachers and our gatherings and rightly, too, but God will not require them at the last. The destruction of His enemies shall be as easy to Him as the making of a world! In passive silence He sat unmoved. And He did but break the silence with, “Let there be light; and light was.” So shall He at the last, when His enemies are raging furiously, blow with His winds and they shall be scattered! They shall melt even as wax and shall be burned like grass. They shall be as the fat of rams—into smoke shall they consume, yes, into smoke shall they consume away.

Furthermore, in this song of Moses you will notice there is one peculiar beauty. Moses not only rejoiced for what had been done, but for the future consequences of it. He says—“The people of Canaan, whom we are about to attack, will now be seized with sudden fear. By the greatness of Your arm they shall be as still as a stone.” Oh, I think I hear them singing that, too, sweetly and softly—“as still as a stone.” How would the words come full, like gentle thunder heard in the distance—“as still as a stone!” And when we shall get on the other side the flood, see the tri-

umph over our enemies and behold our Master reigning, this will form a part of *our* song—that they must henceforth be “as still as a stone.” There will be a hell but it will not be a hell of roaring devils, as it now is. They shall be “as still as a stone.” There will be legions of fallen angels, but they shall no longer have courage to attack us or to defy God—they shall be “as still as a stone.” Oh, how grand will that sound be when the hosts of God’s redeemed, looking down on the chained demons, bound, silenced, struck dumb with terror, shall sing exultingly over them! They must be as still as a stone. And there they must lie and bite their iron bands. The fierce despiser of Christ can no more spit in His face. The proud tyrant can no more lift his hands to oppress the saints. Even Satan can no more attempt to destroy. They shall be “as still as a stone.”

And last of all, the song concludes by noticing *the eternity of God’s reign*—and this will always make a part of the triumphant song. They sang—“The Lord shall reign forever and ever.” Then I can suppose the whole band broke out into their loudest strains of music. “The Lord shall reign forever and ever.” Part of the melody of heaven will be, “The Lord shall reign forever and ever.” That song has cheered us here—“The Lord reigns! Blessed be my rock!” And that song shall be our exultation there. “The Lord reigns forever and ever.” When we shall see the placid sea of providence; when we shall behold the world all fair and lovely; when we shall mark our enemies destroyed and God Almighty triumphant, then we shall shout the song—

**“Hallelujah! For the Lord
God Omnipotent shall reign!
Hallelujah! Let the word
Echo round the earth and main!”**

Oh, may *we* all be there to sing it!

I have one remark to make and I have done. You know, my friends, that as there is something in the song of Moses which is typical of the song of the Lamb, there was another song sung by the waters of the Red Sea which is typical of the song of hell. “What do you mean, Sir, by that dread thought?” Oh, shall I use the word, music? Shall I profane the heavenly word so much as to say, ‘twas doleful music which came from the lips of Pharaoh and his host? Boldly and pompously, with a roll of drum and a blast of trumpet they had entered into the sea. Suddenly their martial music ceased. And ah, you heavens and you floods, what was it? The sea was coming down upon them, utterly to devour them. Oh, may we never hear that shriek, that awful yell of hideous agony that seemed to rend the sky and then was hushed again when Pharaoh and his mighty men were swallowed up and went down quick into hell! Ah, stars, if you had heard it, if the black pall of waters had not shut out the sound from you, you might have continued trembling to this hour and

maybe you are trembling now! Maybe your twinkling by night is on account of that terrible shriek you heard, for surely it were enough to make your tremble on forever! That dreadful shriek, that hideous moan, that horrible howl when a whole army sank into hell at once—when the waters swallowed them up!

Take heed, my friends! Take heed lest you should have to join in that terrible *miserere*. Take heed lest that horrible howl should be yours, instead of the song of the redeemed. And remember, so must it be unless you are born-again, unless you believe in Christ, unless you repent of your sin and renounce it wholly and with trembling hearts put your confidence in the man of sorrows who is soon to be crowned the King of kings and Lord of lords! May God bless you and give you all to taste of His salvation that you may stand upon the sea of glass and not have to feel the terrors of the mingled fire in the lower depths thereof! God Almighty bless this vast assembly, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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MERCY, OMNIPOTENCE AND JUSTICE

NO. 137

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 21, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power,
and will not at all acquit the wicked.”*
Nahum 1:3.

WORKS of art require some education in the beholder before they can be thoroughly appreciated. We do not expect that the uninstructed should at once perceive the varied excellences of a painting from some master hand. We do not imagine that the superlative glories of the harmonies of the princes of song will enrapture the ears of clownish listeners. There must be something in the man, himself, before he can understand the wonders either of nature or of art. Certainly this is true of character. By reason of failures in our character and faults in our life, we are not capable of understanding all the separate beauties and the united perfection of the character of Christ, or of God, His Father. Were we as pure as the angels in heaven, were we what our race once was in the garden of Eden—immaculate and perfect—it is quite certain that we should have a far better and nobler idea of the character of God than we can by possibility attain unto in our fallen state! But you cannot fail to notice that men, through the alienation of their natures, are continually misrepresenting God because they cannot appreciate His perfection. Does God at one time withhold His hand from wrath? Lo, they say that God has ceased to judge the world and looks upon it with listless phlegmatic indifference! Does He at another time punish the world for sin? They say He is severe and cruel. Men *will* misunderstand Him because they are imperfect and are not capable of admiring the character of God!

Now, this is especially true with regard to certain lights and shadows in the character of God which He has so marvelously blended in the perfection of His nature. Although we cannot see the exact point of meeting, yet if we have been at all enlightened by the Spirit, we are struck with wonder at the sacred harmony! In reading Holy Scripture you can say of Paul that he was noted for his zeal—of Peter that he will always be memorable for his courage—of John that he was noted for his lovingness. But did you ever notice, when you read the history of our Master, Jesus Christ, that you never could say He was notable for any one virtue at all? Why was that? It was because the boldness of Peter did so outgrow itself as to throw other virtues into the shade or else the other virtues were so

deficient that they set forth his boldness. The very feet of a man being noted for something is a sure sign that he is not so notable in other things. And it is because of the complete perfection of Jesus Christ that we are not accustomed to say of Him that He was eminent for His zeal, or for His love, or for His courage. We say of Him that He was a perfect character but we are not very easily able to perceive where the shadows and the lights blended, where the meekness of Christ blended into His courage and where His loveliness blended into His boldness in denouncing sin! We are not able to detect the points where they meet. And I believe the more thoroughly we are sanctified, the more it will be a subject of wonder to us how it could be that virtues which seemed so diverse were in so majestic a manner united into one character!

It is just the same of God. And I have been led to make the remarks I have made on my text because of the two clauses thereof which seem to describe contrary attributes. You will notice that there are two things in my text—He is “slow to anger,” and yet He, “will not at all acquit the wicked.” *Our* character is so imperfect that we cannot see the congruity of these two attributes. We are wondering, perhaps, and saying, “How is it He is slow to anger, and yet will not acquit the wicked?” It is because His character is perfect that we do not see where these two things melt into each other—the infallible righteousness and severity of the ruler of the world and His loving-kindness, His long-suffering and His tender mercies! The absence of any one of these things from the character of God would have rendered it imperfect. The presence of them both, though we may not see how they can be congruous with each other, stamps the character of God with a perfection elsewhere unknown.

And now I shall endeavor this morning to set forth these two attributes of God and the connecting link. “*The Lord is slow to anger,*” then comes the *connecting link*, “great in power.” I shall have to show you how that “great in power” refers to the sentence foregoing and the sentence succeeding. And then we shall consider the next attribute—“He will not at all acquit the wicked”—*an attribute of justice*.

I. Let us begin with the first characteristic of God. He is said to be “SLOW TO ANGER.” Let me declare the attribute and then trace it to its source.

God is “slow to anger.” When mercy comes into the world, she drives winged steeds. The axles of her chariot wheels are glowing hot with speed. But when Wrath comes, she walks with tardy footsteps. She is not in haste to slay, she is not swift to condemn. God’s rod of mercy is always in His hands outstretched. God’s sword of justice is in its scabbard—not rusted in it—it can be easily withdrawn—but held there by that hand that presses it back into its sheath, crying, “Sleep, O sword, sleep. For I will have mercy upon sinners and will forgive their transgressions.” God has many orators in heaven, some of them speak with swift

words. Gabriel, when he comes down to tell glad tidings, speaks swiftly—angelic hosts, when they descend from Glory, fly with wings of lightning when they proclaim, “Peace on earth, good will towards men.” But the dark angel of wrath is a slow orator—with many a pause between, where melting pity joins his languid notes, he speaks and when but half his oration is completed, he often stops and withdraws himself from his rostrum giving way to pardon and to mercy—he having but addressed the people that they might be driven to repentance and so might receive peace from the scepter of God’s love.

Brothers and sisters, I shall now try to show you how God is slow to anger.

First, I will prove that He is, “slow to anger,” *because He never smites without first threatening*. Men who are passionate and swift in anger give a word and a blow—sometimes the blow first and the word afterwards! Oftentimes kings, when subjects have rebelled against them, have crushed them, first, and then reasoned with them afterwards. They have given no time of threat, no period of repentance. They have allowed no space for turning to their allegiance. They have at once crushed them in their hot displeasure, making a full end of them! Not so God—He will not cut down the tree that cumpers the ground until He has dug about it and fertilized it. He will not at once slay the man whose character is the most vile—until He has first hewn him by the prophets, He will not hew him by judgments. He will warn the sinner before He condemns him. He will send his prophets, “rising up early and late,” giving him “line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.” He will not smite the city without warning. Sodom shall not perish until Lot has been within her. The world shall not be drowned until eight prophets have been preaching in it and Noah, the eighth, comes to prophesy of the coming of the Lord. He will not smite Nineveh till He has sent a Jonah. He will not crush Babylon till His prophets have cried through its streets. He will not slay a man until He has given many warnings, by sicknesses, by the pulpit, by providence and by consequences. He smites not with a heavy blow at once. He threatens first. He does not in grace, as in nature, send lightning, first, and thunder afterwards, but He sends the thunder of His Law, first, and the lightning of execution follows it. The lictor of divine justice carries His axe bound up in a bundle of rods, for He will not cut off men until He has reproved them, that they may repent. He is “slow to anger.”

But again, God is also *very slow to threaten*. Although He will threaten before He condemns, yet He is slow even in His threats. God’s lips move swiftly when He promises, but slowly when He threatens. Long rolls the pealing thunder, slowly roll the drums of heaven when they sound the death march of sinners. Sweetly flows the music of the rapid notes which proclaim free grace and love and mercy. God is slow to threaten. He will

not send a Jonah to Nineveh until Nineveh has become foul with sin. He will not even tell Sodom it shall be burned with fire until Sodom has become a reeking dunghill, obnoxious to earth as well as heaven! He will not drown the world with a deluge, or even threaten to do it, until the sons of God, themselves, make unholy alliances and begin to depart from Him. He does not even threaten the sinner by his conscience until the sinner has oftentimes sinned. He will often tell the sinner of his sins, often urge him to repent, but He will not make hell stare him hard in the face, with all its dreadful terror, until much sin has stirred up the lion from his lair and made God hot in wrath against the iniquities of man! He is slow even to threaten.

But, best of all, when God threatens, *how slow He is to sentence the criminal!* When He has told them that He will punish unless they repent, how long a space He gives them in which to turn unto Himself! “He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nothing.” He stays His hand. He will not be in hot haste when He has threatened them, to execute the sentence upon them. Have you ever observed that scene in the garden of Eden at the time of the fall? God had threatened Adam, that if he sinned he should surely die. Adam sinned—did God make haste to sentence him? ‘Tis sweetly said, “The Lord God *walked* in the Garden in the cool of the day.” Perhaps that fruit was plucked at early morn. Maybe it was plucked at noontime. But God was in no haste to condemn! He waited till the sun was well near set and in the cool of the day came and as an old expositor has put it very beautifully, “when He did come, He did not come on wings of wrath, but He ‘walked in the garden in the cool of the day.’” He was in no haste to slay! I think I see Him, as He was represented then to Adam, in those glorious days when God walked with man. I think I see the wonderful similitude in which the Unseen did veil Himself—I see Him walking among the trees so slowly—yes, if it were right to give such a picture—beating His breast and shedding tears that He should have to condemn man! At last I hear His doleful voice—“Adam, where are you? Where have you cast yourself, poor Adam? You have cast yourself from My favor, you have cast yourself into nakedness and into fear, for you are hiding yourself—Adam, where are you? I pity you! You thought to be God. Before I condemn you, I will give you one note of pity. Adam, where are you?” Yes, the Lord was slow to anger, slow to write the sentence even though the command had been broken and the threat was therefore of necessity brought into force! It was so with the flood—He threatened the earth but He would not fully seal the sentence and stamp it with the seal of heaven until He had given space for repentance. Noah must come and through his 120 years must preach the word of God. He must come and testify to an unthinking and an ungodly generation! The ark must be built to be a perpetual sermon! There it must be upon its mountaintop, waiting for the floods to float it, that it

might be an everyday warning to the ungodly! O heavens, why did you not at once open your floods? Fountains of the great deep, why did you not burst up in a moment? God said, "I will sweep away the world with a flood"—why, why did you not rise? "Because," I hear them saying with gurgling notes, "because, although God had threatened, He was slow to sentence, and He said in Himself, 'Haply, they may repent. Perhaps they may turn from their sin.' And therefore did He bid us rest and be quiet, for He is slow to anger."

And yet once more—even when the sentence against a sinner is signed and sealed by heaven's broad seal of condemnation—even then, *God is slow to carry it out*. The doom of Sodom is sealed. God has declared it shall be burned with fire. But God is tardy. He stops. He will, Himself, go down to Sodom that He may see the iniquity of it. And when He gets there, guilt is rife in the streets. 'Tis night and the crew of worse than beasts besiege the door. Does He then lift His hands? Does He then say, "Rain hell out of heaven, you skies"? No, He lets them pursue their riot all night, spares them to the last moment and though when the sun was risen, the burning hail began to fall, yet was the reprieve as long as possible. God was not in haste to condemn. God had threatened to root out the Canaanites. He declared that all the children of Ammon should be cut off. He had promised Abraham that He would give their land unto his seed forever and they were to be utterly slain—but He made the children of Israel wait 400 years in Egypt—and He let these Canaanites live all through the days of the patriarchs. And even then, when He led His avenging ones out of Egypt, He kept them forty years in the wilderness because He was reluctant to slay poor Canaan. "Yet," said He, "I will give them space. Though I have stamped their condemnation, though their death warrant has come forth from the Court of King's Bench, and must be executed, yet will I reprieve them as long as I can." And He stops until at last, mercy had had enough and Jericho's melting ashes, and the destruction of Ai betokened that the sword was out of its scabbard and God had awaked like a mighty man—and like a strong man full of wrath! God is slow to execute the sentence even when He has declared it.

And ah, my friends, there is a sorrowful thought that has just crossed my mind. There are some men yet alive who are sentenced now. I believe that Scripture bears me out in a dreadful thought which I just wish to hint at. There are some men who are condemned before they are finally damned—there are some men whose sins go before them unto judgment—who are given over to a seared conscience. Concerning these it may be said that repentance and salvation are impossible. There are some few men in the world who are like John Bunyan's man in the iron cage—can never get out. They are like Esau—they find no place of repentance, though like he, they do not seek it—for if they sought it they would find it. Many there are who have sinned "the sin unto death," con-

cerning whom we cannot pray. For we are told, "I do not say that you shall pray for it." But why, why, why are they not already in the flames? If they are condemned; if mercy has shut her eyes forever upon them; if she never will stretch out her hand to give them pardon—why, why, why are they not cut down and swept away? Because God says, "I will not have mercy upon them, but I will let them live a little while longer, though I have condemned them. I am reluctant to carry the sentence out. I will spare them as long as it is right that man should live. I will let them have a long life here, for they will have a fearful eternity of wrath forever." Yes, let them have their little whirl of pleasure. Their end shall be most fearful. Let them beware, for although God is slow to anger, He is sure in it.

If God were not slow to anger, would He not have smitten this huge city of ours, this behemoth city? Would He not have smitten it into a thousand pieces and blotted out the remembrance of it from the earth? The iniquities of this city are so great that if God should dig up her very foundations and cast her into the sea, she well deserves it! Our streets at night present spectacles of vice that cannot be equaled! Surely there can be no nation and no country that can show a city so utterly debauched as this great city of London if our midnight streets are indications of our immorality! You allow, in your public places of resort—I mean you, my lords and ladies—you allow things to be said in your hearing of which your modesty ought to be ashamed! You can sit in theatres to hear plays at which modesty would blush—I say nothing of piety. That the ruder sex could have listened to the obscenities of *La Traviata* is surely bad enough—but that ladies of the highest refinement and the most approved taste should dishonor themselves by such a patronage of vice is, indeed, intolerable! Let the sins of the lower theatres escape without your censure, you gentlemen of England—the lowest bestiality of the nethermost hell of a playhouse can look to your opera houses for their excuse! I thought that with the pretensions this city makes to piety, for sure, they would not have so far gone and that after such a warning as they have had from the press, itself—a press which is certainly not too religious—they would not so indulge their evil passions! But because the pill is gilded, you suck down the poison—because the thing is popular, you patronize it—it is lustful, it is abominable, it is deceitful! You take your children to hear what yourselves never ought to listen to! You will sit in merry and grand company to listen to things from which your modesty ought to revolt! And I would surely hope it does, although the tide may for a while deceive you. Ah, God only knows the secret wickedness of this great city! It demands a loud and a trumpet voice. It needs a prophet to cry aloud, "Sound an alarm, sound an alarm, sound an alarm," in this city, for verily the enemy grows upon us, the power of the evil one is mighty and we are fast going to perdition unless God shall put forth His hand and roll

back the black torrent of iniquity that streams down our streets! But God is slow to anger, and does still stay His sword. Wrath said yesterday, “Unsheathe yourself, O sword.” And the sword struggled to get free. Mercy put her hand upon the hilt and said, “Be still!” “Unsheathe yourself, O sword!” Again it struggled from its scabbard. Mercy put her hand on it and said, “Back!”—and it rattled back again. Wrath stamped his foot and said, “Awake O sword, awake!” It struggled yet again, till half its blade was outdrawn. “Back, back!”—said mercy and with a manly push she sent it back rattling into its sheath—and there it still sleeps—for the Lord is “slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”

Now I am to trace this attribute of God to its source—why is He slow to anger?

He is slow to anger, *because He is infinitely good*. Good is His name—“good”—God. Good in His nature—because He is slow to anger. He is slow to anger, again, *because He is great*. Little things are always swift in anger, great things are not so. The silly dog barks at every passerby and bears no insult. The lion would bear a thousand times as much. And the bull sleeps in his pasture and will bear much before he lifts up his might. The leviathan in the sea, though he makes the deep to be hoary when he is enraged, yet is slow to be stirred up, while the little and puny are always swift in anger. God’s greatness is one reason of the slowness of His wrath!

II. But to proceed at once to the link. A great reason why He is slow to anger is because He is GREAT IN POWER. This is to be the connecting link between this part of the subject and the last and, therefore, I must beg your attention. I say that these words, *great in power*, connect the first sentence to the last. And it does so in this way. The Lord is slow to anger, and He is slow to anger because He is great in power. “How say you so?”—asks one. I answer, he that is great in power has power over himself. And he that can keep his own temper down and subdue himself, is greater than he who rules a city, or can conquer nations. We heard but yesterday, or the day before, mighty displays of God’s power in the rolling thunder which alarmed us. And when we saw the splendor of His might in the glistening lightning when He lifted up the gates of heaven and we saw the brightness thereof and then He closed them again upon the dusty earth in a moment—even then we did not see anything but the crumbs of His power, compared with the power which He has over Himself. When God’s power restrains Himself, then it is power, indeed—the power to curb power—the power that binds omnipotence is omnipotence surpassed! God is great in power and, therefore, does He keep in His anger. A man who has a strong mind can bear to be insulted, can bear offenses because he is strong. The weak mind snaps and snarls at the little—the strong mind bears it like a rock. It moves not, though a thousand breakers dash upon it and cast their pitiful malice in the spray up-

on its summit. God marks His enemies and yet He moves not. He stands still and lets them curse Him, yet is He not wrathful. If He were less of a God than He is, if He were less mighty than we know Him to be, He would long before this have sent forth the whole of His thunders and emptied the magazines of heaven! He would long before this have blasted the earth with the wondrous mines He has prepared in its lower surface, the flame that burns there would have consumed us and we would have been utterly destroyed! We bless God that the greatness of His power is our protection! He is slow to anger because He is great in power.

And now there is no difficulty in showing how this link unites itself with the next part of the text. "He is great in power and will not at all acquit the wicked." This needs no demonstration in words. I have but to touch the feelings and you will see it. The greatness of His power is the assurance and insurance that He will not acquit the wicked. Who among you could witness the storm on Friday night without having thoughts concerning your own sinfulness stirred in your bosoms? Men do not think of God, the punisher, or Jehovah, the avenger, when the sun is shining and the weather calm. But in times of tempest, whose cheek is not blanched? The Christian oftentimes rejoices in it. He can say, "My soul is well at ease amidst this revelry of earth; I do rejoice at it. It is a day of feasting in my Father's hall, a day of high feast and carnival in heaven, and I am glad—

***"The God that reigns on high,
And thunders when He pleases,
That rides upon the stormy sky
And manages the seas,
This awful God is ours!
Our Father and our love,
He shall send down His heavenly powers
To carry us above."***

But the man who is not of an easy conscience will be ill at ease when the timbers of the house are creaking and the foundations of the solid earth seem to groan! Ah, who is he, then, that does not tremble? Yonder lofty tree is split in half. That lightning flash has smitten its trunk and there it lies forever blasted, a monument of what God can do! Who stood there and saw it? Was he a swearer? Did he swear, then? Was he a Sabbath-breaker? Did he love his Sabbath-breaking, then? Was he haughty? Did he then despise God? Ah, how he shook! Saw you not his hair stand on end? Did not his cheeks blanch in an instant? Did he not close his eyes and start back in horror when he saw that dreadful spectacle and thought God would smite him, too? Yes, the power of God, when seen in the tempest, on sea or on land, in the earthquake or in the hurricane, is instinctively a proof that He will not acquit the wicked! I know not how to explain the feeling, but it is nevertheless the truth—majestic displays of omnipotence have an effect upon the mind of convincing even the hard-

ened—that God, who is so powerful, “will not at all acquit the wicked.” Thus have I tried to explain and make bare the link of the chain.

III. The last attribute and the most terrible one, is, “HE WILL NOT AT ALL ACQUIT THE WICKED.” Let me unfold this, first of all, and then let me endeavor to trace it, also, to its source, as I did the first attribute.

God “will not acquit the wicked.” How can I prove this? I prove it thus. Never once has He pardoned an unpunished sin. Not in all the years of the Most High, not in all the days of His right hand has He once blotted out sin without punishment! “What?” you say—“were not those in heaven pardoned? Are there not many transgressors pardoned and do they not escape without punishment? Has He not said, ‘I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and like a thick cloud your iniquities?’” Yes, true, most true and yet my assertion is also true—not one of all those sins that have been pardoned were pardoned without punishment! Do you ask me why and how such a thing as that can be the truth? I point you to yonder dreadful sight on Calvary! The punishment which fell not on the forgiven sinner fell there! The cloud of justice was charged with fiery hail—the sinner deserved it—it fell on Him! But, for all that, it fell and spent its fury. It fell there, in that great reservoir of misery. It fell into the Savior’s heart! The plagues which should light on *our* ingratitude did not fall on us, but they fell somewhere and who was it who was plagued? Tell me, Gethsemane. Tell me, O Calvary’s summit, who was plagued? The doleful answer comes, “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!*” “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” It is Jesus suffering all the plagues of sin! Sin is still punished, though the *sinner* is delivered.

But, you say, this has scarcely proven that He will not acquit the wicked! I hold it *has* proven it and proven it clearly. But do you need any further proof that God will not acquit the wicked? Need I lead you through a long list of terrible wonders that God has worked—the wonders of His vengeance? Shall I show you blighted Eden? Shall I let you see a world all drowned—sea monsters whelping and stabling in the palaces of kings? Shall I let you hear the last shriek of the last drowning man as he falls into the flood and dies, washed by that huge wave from the hilltop? Shall I let you see death riding upon the summit of a crested billow, upon a sea that knows no shore and triumphing because his work is done—his quiver empty, for all men are slain, except where life flows in the midst of death in yonder ark? Need I let you see Sodom, with its terrified inhabitants, when the volcano of almighty wrath spouted fiery hail upon it? Shall I show you the earth opening its mouth to swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram? Need I take you to the plagues of Egypt? Shall I again repeat the death shriek of Pharaoh and the drowning of his host? Surely, we need not to be told of cities that are in ruins, or of nations that have been cut off in a day. You need not to be told how God has smitten the earth from one side to the other when He has been

angry and how He has melted mountains in His hot displeasure! No, we have proofs enough in history, proofs enough in Scripture that “He will not at all acquit the wicked.” If you wanted the best proof, however, you would borrow the black wings of a miserable imagination, and fly beyond the world through the dark realm of chaos on—far on—where those battlements of fire are gleaming with a horrid light! If through them, with a spirit’s safety, you could fly, and could behold the worm that never dies, the pit that knows no bottom—and could you there see the unquenchable fire, and listen to the shrieks and wails of men and women who are banished forever from God—if, sirs, it were possible for you to hear the sullen groans and hollow moans and shrieks of tortured ghosts, then would you come back to this world amazed and petrified with horror and you would say, “Indeed, He will not acquit the wicked.” HELL is the argument of the text—may you never have to prove the text by feeling in yourselves the argument fully carried out. “He will not at all acquit the wicked.”

And now *we trace this terrible attribute to its source.*

Why is this? We reply, God will not acquit the wicked *because He is good.* What? Does goodness demand that sinners be punished? It does. The judge must condemn the murderer because he loves his nation. I cannot let you go free. I cannot and I must not. You would slay others who belong to this fair commonwealth if I were to let you go free. “No, I must condemn you from the very loveliness of My nature.” The kindness of a king demands the punishment of those who are guilty. It is not wrathful in the Legislature to make severe laws against great sinners. It is but love towards the rest that sin should be restrained! Yonder great floodgates which keep back the torrent of sin are painted black and look right horrible, like horrid dungeon gates, they frighten my spirit. But are they proofs that God is not good? No, sirs. If you could open wide those gates and let the deluge of sin flow on us, then would you cry, “O God, O God! Shut the gates of punishment! Let law again be established! Set up the pillars and swing the gates upon their hinges! Shut the gates of punishment that this world may not again be utterly destroyed by men who have become worse than brutes.” It needs for very goodness’ sake that sin should be punished. Mercy, with her weeping eyes, (for she has wept for sinners), when she finds they will not repent, looks more terribly stern in her loveliness than justice in all his majesty! She drops the white flag from her hand and says—“No. I called, and they refused. I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. Let them die, let them die”—and that terrible word from the lips of mercy’s self is harsher thunder than the very damnation of justice! Oh, yes, the goodness of God demands that men should perish if they will sin.

And again, *the justice of God demands it.* God is infinitely just and His justice demands that men should be punished unless they turn to Him

with full purpose of heart. Need I pass through all the attributes of God to prove it? I think I need not. We must, all of us, believe that the God who is slow to anger, and great in power is also sure not to acquit the wicked. And now, just a home thrust or two with you. What is your state this morning? My friend—man, woman—what is your state? Can you look up to heaven and say, “Though I have sinned greatly, I believe Christ was punished in my place?—

***‘My faith looks back to see,
The burden He did bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And knows her guilt was there.’***

Can you by humble faith look to Jesus, and say, “My substitute, my refuge, my shield; You are my rock, my trust; in You do I confide”? Then beloved, to you I have nothing to say, except this—Never be afraid when you see God’s power—for now that you are forgiven and accepted, now that by faith you have fled to Christ for refuge, the power of God need no more terrify you than the shield and sword of the warrior need terrify his wife or his child! “No,” says the wife, “is he strong? He is strong for me. Is his arm brawny and are all his sinews fast and strong? Then are they fast and strong for me. While he lives and wears a shield, he will stretch it over my head. And while his good sword can cleave foes, it will cleave my foes, too, and ransom me.” Be of good cheer—fear not His power.

But have some of you never fled to Christ for refuge? Do you not believe in the Redeemer? Have you never confided your soul to His hands? Then, my friends, hear me! In God’s name, hear me just a moment. My friend, I would not stand in your position for an hour—for all the stars twice spelt in gold! For what is your position? You have sinned and God will not acquit you. He will punish you. He is letting you live—you are reprieved. Poor is the life of one who is reprieved without a pardon! Your reprieve will soon run out. Your hourglass is emptying every day. I see on some of you death has put his cold hand and frozen your hair to whiteness. You need your staff—it is the only barrier between you and the grave, now, and you are, all of you, old and young, standing on a narrow neck of land between two boundless seas—that neck of land, that isthmus of life, narrowing every moment and you and you and you are yet unpardoned! There is a city to be sacked and you are in it—soldiers are at the gates. The command is given that every man in the city is to be slaughtered save he who can give the password. “Sleep on, sleep on. The attack is not today, sleep on, sleep on.” “But it is tomorrow, sir.” “Yes, sleep on, sleep on, it is not till tomorrow. Sleep on, procrastinate, procrastinate.” “Hark! I hear a rumbling at the gates, the battering ram is at them. The gates are tottering.” “Sleep on, sleep on. The soldiers are not yet at your doors. Sleep on, sleep on. Ask for no mercy yet. Sleep on, sleep on!” “Yes, but I hear the shrill clarion sound, they are in the streets! Listen to the shrieks of men and women! They are slaughtering

them, they fall, they fall, they fall!” “Sleep on. They are not yet at *your* door.” “But listen, they are at the gate! With heavy tramp I hear the soldiers marching up the stairs!” “No, sleep on, sleep on, they are not yet in your room.” “Why, they are there, they have burst open the door that parted you from them, and there they stand!” “No, sleep on, sleep on, the sword is not yet at your throat, sleep on, sleep on!” It is at your throat! You start with horror. Sleep on, sleep on! But you are a goner. “Demon, why did you tell me to slumber! It would have been wise in me to have escaped the city when first the gates were shaken. Why did I not ask for the password before the troops came? Why by all that is wise—why did I not rush into the streets, and cry the password when the soldiers were there? Why stood I till the knife was at my throat? Yes, demon that you are, be cursed! But I am cursed with you forever!” You know the application, it is a parable you can all expound. You need not that I should tell you that death is after you, that justice must devour you, that Christ crucified is the only password that can save you and yet you have not learned it! And with some of you, death is nearing, nearing, nearing and with all of you he is close at hand! I need not expound how Satan is the demon, how in hell you shall curse him and curse yourselves because you procrastinated—how, that seeing God was slow to anger, you were slow to repentance—how, because He was great in power and kept back His anger, therefore you kept back your steps from seeking Him. And here you are what you are!

Spirit of God, bless these words to some souls that they may be saved! May some sinners be brought to the Savior’s feet, and cry for mercy! We ask it for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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PRAYER—THE FORERUNNER OF MERCY

NO. 138

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 28, 1857,
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“Thus says the Lord God: I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.”
Ezekiel 36:37.

IN reading the chapter we have seen the great and exceedingly precious promises which God had made to the favored nation of Israel. God in this verse declares that though the promise was made and though He would fulfill it, yet He would not fulfill it until His people asked Him to do so. He would give them a spirit of prayer by which they would cry earnestly for the blessing and then, when they have cried aloud unto the living God, He would be pleased to answer them from heaven, His dwelling place. The word used here to express the idea of prayer is a suggestive one. “I will yet for this be *inquired of* by the house of Israel.” Prayer, then, is an inquiry! No man can pray aright unless he views prayer in that light. First, I inquire what the promise is. I turn to my Bible and I seek to find the promise whereby the thing which I desire to seek is certified to me as being a thing which God is willing to give. Having inquired so far as that, I take that promise and on my bended knees I inquire of God whether He will fulfill His own promise. I take to Him His own word of covenant and I say to Him, “O Lord, will You not fulfill it and will You not fulfill it now?” And so there again prayer is *inquiry*. After prayer I look for the answer, I expect to be heard and if I am not answered I pray again and my repeated prayers are but fresh inquiries. I expect the blessing to arrive. I go and inquire whether there are any tidings of its coming. I ask and thus I say, “Will You answer me, O Lord? Will You keep Your promise? Or will You shut up Your ears because I misunderstand my own needs and mistake Your promise?” Brothers and sisters, we must use inquiry in prayer and regard prayer as being, first, *an inquiry for the promise*, and then, on the strength of that promise, *an inquiry for the fulfillment*. We expect something to come as a present from a friend—we first have the note, whereby we are informed it is upon the road. We inquire as to what the present is by the reading of the note and then, if it arrives not, we call at the accustomed place where the parcel ought to have been left and we ask or inquire for such-and-such a thing. We have inquired about the promise and then we go and inquire, again, until we get an answer that the promised gift has arrived and is ours. And so it is with prayer. We get the promise by inquiry and we get the fulfillment of it by again inquiring at God’s hands!

Now, this morning I shall try, as God shall help me, first to speak of prayer as *the prelude of blessing*. Next, I shall try to show why prayer is thus constituted by God *the forerunner of His mercies*. And then, I shall close by an *exhortation*, as earnest as I can make it, exhorting you to pray, if you would obtain blessings.

I. Prayer is the FORERUNNER OF MERCIES. Many despise prayer—they despise it because they do not understand it. He who knows how to use that sacred art of prayer will obtain so much thereby that *from its very profitableness* he will be led to speak of it with the highest reverence.

Prayer, we assert, is the prelude of all mercies. We bid you turn back to sacred history and you will find that never did a great mercy come to this world unheralded by prayer. The promise comes alone, with no preventing merit to precede it, but the blessing promised always follows its herald, prayer. You shall note that all the wonders that God did in the old times were first of all sought at His hands by the earnest prayers of His believing people. The other Sabbath [Sermon #136, Vol. 3—ISRAEL IN EGYPT] we beheld Pharaoh cast into the depths of the Red Sea, and all his hosts, “still as a stone,” in the depths of the waters. Was there a prayer that preceded that magnificent overthrow of the Lord’s enemies? Turn to the book of Exodus and you will read, “The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage and they cried and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.” And mark you—just before the sea parted and made a highway for the Lord’s people through its bosom—Moses had prayed unto the Lord and cried earnestly unto Him, so that Jehovah said, “Why do you cry unto Me?” A few Sabbaths ago, when we preached on the subject of the rain which came down from heaven in the days of Elijah, [Sermon #134, Vol. 3—ELIJAH’S APPEAL TO THE UNDECIDED] you will remember how we pictured the land of Judea as an arid wilderness, a mass of dust, destitute of all vegetation. Rain had not fallen for three years! The pastures were dried up. The brooks had ceased to flow. Poverty and distress stared the nation in the face. At an appointed season a sound was heard of abundance of rain and the torrents poured from the skies until the earth was deluged with the happy floods. Do you ask me whether prayer was the prelude to that? I point you to the top of Carmel. Behold a man kneeling before his God, crying, “O my God! Send the rain.” Lo, the majesty of his faith! He sends his servant, Gehazi, to look seven times for the clouds because he believes that they will come in answer to his prayer. And mark the fact—the torrents of rain were the offspring of Elijah’s faith and prayer. Wherever in Holy Writ you shall find the blessing, you shall find the prayer that went before it!

Our Lord Jesus Christ was the greatest blessing that men ever had. He was God’s best benefit to a sorrowing world. And did prayer precede Christ’s advent? Was there any prayer which went before the coming of the Lord, when He appeared in the Temple? Oh yes, the prayers of saints for many ages had followed each other. Abraham saw His day and when he died, Isaac took up the note and when Isaac slept with his fathers,

Jacob and the patriarchs still continued to pray. Yes, and in the very days of Christ, prayer was still made for Him continually—Anna the prophetess and the venerable Simeon still looked for the coming of Christ. And day by day they prayed and interceded with God that He would suddenly come to His Temple.

Yes, and mark—as it has been in Sacred Writ, so it shall be with regard to greater things that are yet to happen in the fulfillment of promises. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will one day come in the clouds of heaven. It is my firm belief in common with all who read the Sacred Scriptures aright that the day is approaching when the Lord Jesus shall stand a second time upon the earth—when He shall reign with illimitable sway over all the habitable parts of the globe—when kings shall bow before Him and queens shall be nursing mothers of His Church. But when shall that time come? We shall know its coming by its prelude when prayer shall become more loud and strong, when supplication shall become more universal and more incessant than even as when the tree puts forth her first green leaves. We expect that the spring approaches—even so when prayer shall become more hearty and earnest—we may open our eyes for the day of our redemption draws near! Great prayer is the preface of great mercy and in proportion to our prayer is the blessing that we may expect!

It has been so *in the history of the modern Church*. Whenever she has been awakened to pray, it is then that God has awakened to her help. Jerusalem, when you have shaken yourself from the dust, your Lord has taken His sword from the scabbard. When you have suffered your hands to hang down and your knees to become feeble, He has left you to become scattered by your enemies. You have become barren and your children have been cut off, but when you have learned to cry—when you have begun to pray—God has restored unto you the joy of His salvation and He has gladdened your heart and multiplied your children. The history of the Church up to this age has been a series of waves, a succession of ebbs and flows. A strong wave of religious prosperity has washed over the sands of sin. Again it has receded and immorality has reigned. You shall read in English history—it has been the same. Did the righteous prosper in the days of Edward VI? They shall again be tormented under a Bloody Mary! Did Puritanism become omnipotent over the land, did the glorious Cromwell reign and did the saints triumph? Charles the Second's debaucheries and wickedness became the black receding wave. Again, Whitefield and Wesley poured throughout the nation a mighty wave of religion, which like a torrent drove everything before it. Again it receded and there came the days of Payne and of men full of infidelity and wickedness. Again there came a strong impulse and again God glorified Himself. And up to this date, again, there has been a decline. Religion, though more fashionable than it once was, has lost much of its vitality and power. Much of the zeal and earnestness of the ancient preachers has departed and the wave has receded again. But, blessed be God, flood tide has again set in—once more God has awakened His

Church! We have seen in these days what our fathers never hoped to see—we have seen the great men of a Church, not too noted for its activity, at last coming forth—and God is with them in their coming forth! They have come forth to preach unto the people the unsearchable riches of God! I hope we may have another great wave of religion rolling in upon us. Shall I tell you what I conceive to be the moon that influences these waves? My brothers and sisters, even as the moon influences the tides of the sea, even so does *prayer*, (which is the reflection of the sunlight of heaven and is God's moon in the sky), influence the tides of godliness! When our prayers become like the crescent moon and when we stand not in conjunction with the sun, then there is but a shallow tide of godliness. But when the full orb shines upon the earth and when God Almighty makes the prayers of His people full of joy and gladness, it is then that the sea of Grace returns to its strength! In proportion to the prayerfulness of the Church shall be its present success, though its ultimate success is beyond the reach of hazard.

And now, again, to come nearer home—this truth of God is true of each of you, my dearly beloved in the Lord, *in your own personal experience*. God has given you many an unsolicited favor but still, great prayer has always been the great prelude of great mercy with you. When you first found peace through the blood of the cross, you had been praying much beforehand and earnestly interceding with God that He would remove your doubts and deliver you from your distresses. Your assurance was the result of prayer! And when at any time you have had high and rapturous joys, you have been obliged to look upon them as answers to your prayers. When you have had great deliverances out of sore troubles and mighty helps in great dangers, you have been able to say, “I cried unto the Lord and He heard me and delivered me out of all my fears.” Prayer, we say, in your case, as well as in the case of the Church at large, is always the preface to blessing!

And now, some will say to me, “In what way do you regard prayer, then, as affecting the blessing? God, the Holy Spirit vouchsafes prayer before the blessing. But in what way is prayer connected with the blessing?” I reply, prayer goes before the blessing in several senses.

It goes before the blessing, *as the blessing's shadow*. When the sunlight of God's mercy rises upon our necessities, it casts the shadow of prayer far down upon the plain, or, to use another illustration, when God piles up a hill of mercies, He, Himself, shines behind them and He casts on our spirits the shadow of prayer, so that we may rest certain. If we are in prayer, our prayers are the shadows of mercy. Prayer is the rustling of the wings of the angels that are on their way bringing us the gifts of heaven. Have you heard prayer in your heart? You shall see the angel in your house! When the chariots that bring us blessings rumble, their wheels sound with prayer. We hear the prayer in our own spirits and that prayer becomes the token of the coming blessings! Even as the cloud foreshadows rain, so prayer foreshadows the blessing. Even as the green

blade is the beginning of the harvest, so is prayer the prophecy of the blessing that is about to come!

Again—prayer goes before mercy, *as the representative of it*. Oftentimes the king, in his progress through his realms, sends one before him who blows a trumpet. And when the people see him, they know that the king comes because the trumpeter is there. But, perhaps, there is before him a more important personage, who says, “I am sent before the king to prepare for his reception and I am this day to receive anything that you have to send the king, for I am his representative.” So prayer is the representative of the blessing before the blessing comes. The prayer comes and when I see the prayer, I say, “Prayer, you are the vice regent of the blessing. If the blessing is the king, you are the regent. I know and look upon you as being the representative of the blessing I am about to receive.”

But I also think that sometimes and generally, prayer goes before the blessing *even as the cause goes before the effect*. Some people say when they get anything that they get it because they prayed for it. But if they are people who are not spiritually-minded and who have no faith, let them know that whatever they may get, it is not in answer to prayer—for we know that God hears not sinners and the “sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.” “Well,” says one, “I asked God for such-and-such a thing the other day. I know I am no Christian but I got it. Don’t you consider that I had it through my prayers?” No, sir, no more than I believe the reasoning of the old man who affirmed that the Goodwin Sands had been caused by the building of Tenterden Steeple! The sands had not been there, before, and the sea did not come up till it was built and, therefore, he said, the steeple must have caused the flood! Now, your prayers have no more connection with your blessing than the sea with the steeple. But in the Christian’s case it is far different! Oftentimes the blessing is actually brought down from heaven by the prayer. An objector may reply, “I believe that prayer may have much influence on yourself, sir, but I do not believe that it has any effect on the Divine Being.” Well, sir, I shall not try to convince you because it is as useless for me to try to convince you of that, unless you believe the testimonies I bring, as it would be to convince you of any historical fact by simply reasoning about it. I could bring out of this congregation not one, nor twenty, but many hundreds who are rational, intelligent persons and who would, each of them, most positively declare that some hundreds of times in their lives they have been led to seek most earnestly, deliverance out of trouble, or help in adversity—and they have received the answers to their prayers in so marvelous a manner that they, themselves, did no more doubt their being answers to their cries than they could doubt the existence of a God! They felt sure that He heard them. They were certain of it. Oh, the testimonies to the power of prayer are so numerous that the man who rejects them flies in the face of good testimonies! We are not all enthusiasts. Some of us are cool-blooded enough—we are not all fanatics. We are not all quite wild in our piety. Some of us in other things, we

reckon, act in a tolerably common-sense way. But yet we all agree in this—that our prayers have been heard—and we could tell many stories of our prayers, still fresh upon our memories, where we have cried unto God and He has heard us! But the man who says he does not believe God hears prayer, knows He does. I have no respect for his skepticism, any more than I have any respect for a man's doubt about the existence of a God. The man does not doubt it! He has to choke his own conscience before he dares to say he does. It is complimenting him too much to argue with him. Will you argue with a liar? He affirms a lie and knows it is so. Will you condescend to argue with him to prove that he is a liar? The man is incapable of reasoning! He is beyond the pale of those who ought to be treated as respectable persons. If a man rejects the existence of God, he does it desperately against his own conscience and if he is bad enough to stifle his own conscience so much as to believe that, or pretend that he believes it, we think we shall demean ourselves if we argue with so loose a character! He must be solemnly warned, for reason is thrown away upon deliberate liars. But you know, sir, God hears prayer—because if you do not, either way you must be a fool! You are a fool for not believing so and a worse fool for praying, yourself, when you do not believe He hears you. “But I do not pray, sir.” Do not pray? Did I not hear a whisper from your nurse when you were sick? She said you were a wonderful saint when you had the fever. You do not pray? No, but when things do not go quite well in business, you would to God that they would go better and you do, sometimes, cry out to Him a kind of prayer which He cannot accept but which is still enough to show that there is an instinct in man that teaches him to pray!

I believe that even as birds build their nests without any teaching, so men use prayer in the form of it (I do not mean *spiritual* prayer)—I say, men use prayer from the very instinct of nature! There is something in man which makes him a praying animal. He cannot help it. He is obliged to do it. He laughs at himself when he is on the dry land. But he prays when he is on the sea and in a storm! He may not pray when he is well, but when he is sick, he prays as fast as anybody. He would not pray when he is rich, but when he is poor, he then prays strongly enough! He knows God hears prayer and he knows that men should pray—but there is no disputing with him—if he dares to deny his own conscience, he is incapable of reasoning—he is beyond the pale of morality and, therefore, we dare not try to influence him by reasoning. We may and hope we can use other means with him, but not that which compliments him by allowing him to answer! O saints of God, whatever you can give up, you can never give up this truth of God—that He hears prayer! If you did disbelieve it today, you would have to believe it again tomorrow, for you would have such another proof of it through some other trouble that would roll over your head that you would be obliged to feel, if you were not obliged to say, “Verily, God hears and answers prayer.”

Prayer, then, is the prelude of mercy, for very often it is the cause of the blessing. That is to say, it is a part cause. The mercy of God being the

great first cause, prayer is often the secondary agency whereby the blessing is brought down.

II. And now I am going to try to show you, in the second place, WHY IT IS THAT GOD IS PLEASED TO MAKE PRAYER THE TRUMPETER OF MERCY, OR THE FORERUNNER OF IT.

1. I think it is, in the first place, *because God loves that man should have some reason for having a connection with Him.* Says God, “My creatures will shun Me; even My own people will too little seek Me—they will flee from Me instead of coming to Me. What shall I do? I intend to bless them—shall I lay the blessings at their doors so that when they open them in the morning they may find them there, unasked and unsought? Yes,” says God, “many mercies I will do so with. I will give them much that they need without their seeking for it. But in order that they may not wholly forget Me, there are some mercies that I will not put at their doors. I will make them come to My house after them. I love My children to visit Me,” says the heavenly Father, “I love to see them in My courts, I delight to hear their voices and to see their faces. They will not come to see Me if I give them all they need. I will keep them sometimes, without, and then they will come to Me and ask—and I shall have the pleasure of seeing them and they will have the profit of entering into fellowship with Me.” It is as if some father should say to his son who is entirely dependent upon him, “I might give you a fortune at once, so that you might never have to come to me again. But, my son, it delights me, it affords me pleasure to supply your needs. I like to know what it is you require so that I may oftentimes have to give you and so may frequently see your face. Now I shall give you only enough to serve you for such a time, and if you need anything, you must come to my house for it. O, my son, I do this because I desire to see you often! I desire to have many opportunities of showing how much I love you.” So does God say to His children, “I do not give you all at once; I give all to you in the promise, but if you want to have it in the detail, you must come to Me to ask Me for it—so shall you see My face and so shall you have a reason for often coming to My feet.”

2. But there is another reason. God would make prayer the preface to mercy *because often prayer itself gives the mercy.* You are full of fear and sorrow—you need comfort. God says, pray and you shall get it. And the reason is because prayer is of itself a comforting exercise. We are all aware that when we have any heavy news upon our minds, it often relieves us if we can tell a friend about it. Now there are some troubles we would not tell to others, for perhaps many minds could not sympathize with us—God has therefore provided *prayer* as a channel for the flow of grief! “Come,” He says, “your troubles may find vent here. Come, put them into My ear—pour out your heart before Me and so will you prevent its bursting. If you must weep, come and weep at My mercy seat. If you must cry, come and cry in the closet, and I will hear you.” And how often have you and I tried that? We have been on our knees, overwhelmed with sorrow, and we have risen up and said, “Ah, I can meet it all now!”—

**“Now I can say my God is mine—
Now I can all my joys resign,
Can tread the world beneath my feet,
And all that earth calls good or great.”**

Prayer itself sometimes gives the mercy.

Take another case. You are in difficulty; you don't know which way to go, nor how to act. God has said that He will *direct* His people. You go forth in prayer and pray to God to direct you. Are you aware that your very prayer will frequently, of itself, furnish you with the answer? While the mind is absorbed in thinking over the matter and in praying concerning the matter, it is just in the likeliest state to suggest to itself the course which is proper. For while, in prayer, I am spreading all the circumstances before God, I am like a warrior surveying the battlefield—and when I rise, I know the state of affairs and know how to act. Often, thus, you see, prayer gives the very thing we ask for in itself! Often when I have had a passage of Scripture that I cannot understand, I am in the habit of spreading the Bible before me. And if I have looked at all the commentators and they do not seem to agree, I have spread the Bible on my chair, kneeled down, put my finger upon the passage and sought God's instruction. I have thought that when I have risen from my knees, I understood it far better than before. I believe that the very exercise of prayer did, of itself, bring the answer, to a great degree, for the mind being occupied upon it and the heart being exercised with it, the whole man was in the most excellent position for truly understanding it! John Bunyan said, “The truths of God that I know best, I have learned on my knees.” And he said again, “I never know a thing well till it is burned into my heart by prayer.” Now that is, in a great measure, through the agency of God's Holy Spirit, but I think that it may also, in some measure, be accounted for by the fact that prayer exercises the mind upon the thing and then the mind is led by an insensible process to lay hold upon the right result! Prayer, then, is a suitable prelude to the blessing, because it often carries the blessing in itself.

3. But again, it seems but right and just and appropriate that prayer should go before the *blessing, because in prayer there is a sense of need*. I cannot distribute assistance to those who do not represent their case to me as being destitute and sick. I cannot suppose that the physician will trouble himself to leave his own house to go into the house of one that is ill unless the need has been specified to him and unless he has been informed that the case requires his assistance. Nor can we expect of God that He will wait upon His own people unless His own people should first state their need to Him—shall feel their need and come before Him crying for a blessing! A sense of need is a divine gift—prayer fosters it and is, therefore, highly beneficial.

4. And yet again, prayer before the blessing *serves to show us the value of it*. If we had the blessings without asking for them, we would think them common things. But prayer makes the common pebbles of God's temporal bounties more precious than diamonds! And in *spiritual* prayer,

the cut diamond glistens more. The thing was precious, but I did not know its preciousness till I had sought for it and sought it long. After a long chase, the hunter prizes the animal because he has set his heart upon it and is determined to have it. And yet more truly, after a long hunger, he that eats finds more relish in his food. So prayer does sweeten the mercy. Prayer teaches us its preciousness. It is the reading over of the will, the schedule, and the account—before the estate and the properties are themselves transferred. We know the value of the purchase by reading over the will of it in prayer and when we have groaned out our own expression of its peerless price, and then it is that God bestows the benediction upon us! Prayer, therefore, goes before the blessing, because it shows us the value of it.

But doubtless even reason itself suggests that it is but natural that God, the All-Good, should give His favors to those who ask. It seems but right that He should expect of us that we should first ask at His hands and then He will bestow. It is goodness great enough that His hand is ready to open—surely it is but little that He should say to His people, “For this thing will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.”

III. Let me close BY STIRRING YOU UP TO USE THE HOLY ART OF PRAYER AS A MEANS OF OBTAINING THE BLESSING. Do you demand of me, “and for what shall we pray?” The answer is upon my tongue. Pray for *yourselves*, pray for your families, pray for the *Churches*, pray for *the one great kingdom of our Lord on earth*.

Pray *for yourselves*. Surely you will never lack some subject for intercession! So broad are your needs, so deep are your necessities that until you are in heaven you will always find room for prayer! Do you need nothing? Then I fear you do not know yourself. Have you no mercy to ask of God? Then I fear you have never had mercies of Him and are yet “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” If you are a child of God, your needs will be as numerous as your moments and you will need to have as many prayers as there are hours! Pray that you may be holy, humble, zealous and patient. Pray that you may have communion with Christ and enter into the banqueting house of His love. Pray for yourself—that you may be an example unto others—that you may honor God, here, and inherit His kingdom hereafter.

In the next place, pray for your *families*; for your children. If they are pious, you can still pray for them that their piety may be real, that they may be upheld in their profession. And if they are ungodly, you have a whole fountain of arguments for prayer. So long as you have a child unpardoned, pray for him! So long as you have a child alive that is saved, pray for him, that he may be kept. You have enough reason to pray for those who have proceeded from your own loins, but if you have no cause to do that, pray for your servants. Will you not stoop to that? Then surely you have not stooped to be saved, for he that is saved knows how to pray for all. Pray for your servants—that they may serve God—that their life in your house may be of use to them. That is an ill house where the serv-

ants are not prayed for. I should not like to be waited upon by one for whom I could not pray! Perhaps the day when this world shall perish will be the day unbrightened by a prayer. And perhaps the day when a great misdeed was done by some man was the day when his friends left off praying for him. Pray for your households!

And then pray for the *Church*. Let the minister have a place in your heart. Mention his name at your family altar and in your closet. You expect him to come before you, day after day, to teach you the things of the kingdom. You expect him to exhort and stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. If he is a true minister, there will be work to be done in this matter. He cannot write his sermon and read it to you. He does not believe Christ said, “Go and *read the gospel* to every creature.” Do you know the cares of a minister? Do you know the trouble he has with his own church—how the erring ones grieve him, how even the right ones vex his spirit by their infirmities—how, when the church is large, there will always be some great trouble in the hearts of some of his people? And he is the reservoir of all—they come to him with all their grief! He is to “weep with them who weep.” And in the pulpit what is his work? God is my witness, I scarcely ever prepare for my pulpit with pleasure—study for the pulpit is to me the most irksome work in the world! I have never come into this house, that I know of, with a smile upon my heart. I may have sometimes gone out with one, but never have I had one when I entered. Preach, preach, twice a day I can and will do. But still there is a traving in preparation for it and even the utterance is not always accompanied with joy and gladness. God knows that if it were not for the good that we trust is to be accomplished by the preaching of the word, it is no happiness to a man’s life to be well known. It robs him of all comfort to be from morning to night sought for labor, to have no rest for the sole of his feet or for his brain—to be a great religious hack—to bear every burden—to have people asking, as they do in the country, when they need to get into a cart, “Will it hold it?”—Never thinking whether the horse can drag it. To have them asking, “Will you preach at such a place? You are preaching twice, couldn’t you manage to get to such a place and preach again?”

Everyone else has a constitution—the minister has none—until he kills himself and is condemned as imprudent! If you are determined to do your duty in that place to which God has called you, you need the prayers of your people that you may be able to do the work and you will need their abundant prayers that you may be sustained in it! I bless God that I have a valiant corps of men and women who day without night besiege God’s throne on my behalf! I would speak to you again, my brothers and sisters, and beseech you, by our loving days that are past, by all the hard fighting that we have had side by side with each other, not to cease to pray now! The time was when in hours of trouble you and I have bent our knees together in God’s House and we have prayed to God that He would give us a blessing. You remember how great and sore troubles did roll over our head—how men did ride over us. We went through fire and

through water and now God has brought us into a large place and so multiplied us—let us not cease to pray! Let us still cry out unto the living God that He may give us a blessing! Oh, may God help me, if you cease to pray for me! Let me know the day and I will cease to preach. Let me know when you intend to cease your prayers and I shall cry, “O my God, give me this day my tomb, and let me slumber in the dust.”

And lastly, let me bid you pray for *the church at large*. This is a happy time we live in. A certain race of croaking souls, who are never pleased with anything, are always crying out about the badness of the times. They cry, “Oh, for the good old times!” Why, these *are* the good old times! Time never was so old as it is now! These are the best times! I think that many an old Puritan would jump out of his grave if he knew what was going on now. If they could have been told of the great movement at Exeter Hall—there is many a man among them who once fought against the Church of England—who would lift his hand to heaven and cry, “My God, I bless You that I see such a day as this!” In these times there is a breaking down of many of the barriers. The bigots are afraid. They are crying out most desperately because they think God’s people will soon love each other too well. They are afraid that the trade of persecution will soon be done with, if we begin to be more and more united. So they are making an outcry and saying, “These are not good times.” But true lovers of God will say they have not lived in better days than these! And they all hopefully look for still greater things. Unless you professors of religion are eminently in earnest prayer, you will disgrace yourselves by neglecting the finest opportunity that men ever had! I think that your fathers who lived in days when great men were upon earth, who preached with much power—I think if they had not prayed, they would have been as unfaithful as you will be—for now the good ship floats upon a flood tide—sleep now and you will not cross the bar at the harbor’s mouth! Never did the sun of prosperity seem to you much more fully on the church during the last 100 years than now. Now is your time—neglect not to sow your seed in this good time of seed-sowing! Neglect not to reap your harvest in these good days when it is ripe! For darker days may come and those of peril, when God shall say, “Because they would not cry to Me, when I stretched out My hands to bless them, therefore will I put away My hands and will no more bless them, until again they shall seek Me.”

And now to close. I have a young man here who has been lately converted. His parents cannot stand him. They entertain the strongest opposition to him, and they threaten him that if he does not leave off praying, they will turn him out of doors. Young man, I have a little story to tell you! There was once a young man in your position—he had begun to pray, and his father knew it. He said to him, “John, you know I am an enemy to religion, and prayer is a thing that shall never be offered in my house.” Still the young man continued in earnest supplication. “Well,” said the father one day, in a hot passion, “you must give up either God or me! I solemnly swear that you shall never darken the threshold of my door again unless you decide that you will give up praying. I give you till

tomorrow morning to choose.” The night was spent in prayer by the young disciple. He rose in the morning, sad to be cast away by his father, but resolute in spirit, that come what might, he would serve his God. The father abruptly accosted him—“Well, what is the answer?” “Father,” he said, “I cannot violate my conscience. I cannot forsake my God.” “Leave immediately,” said his father. And the mother stood there. The father’s hard spirit had made hers hard too, and though she might have wept, she concealed her tears. “Leave immediately” he said. Stepping outside the threshold, the young man said, “I wish you would grant me one request before I go. And if you grant me that, I will never trouble you again.” “Well,” said the father, “you shall have anything you like, but mark me, you *go* after you have had that. You shall never have anything again.” “It is,” said the son, “that you and my mother would kneel down and let me pray for you before I go.” Well, they could hardly object to it. The young man was on his knees in a moment, and began to pray with such unction and power, with such evident love to their souls, with such true and divine earnestness, that they both fell flat on the ground, and when the son rose there they were! And the father said, “You need not go, John. Come and stay. Come and stay.” And it was not long before not only he, but the whole of them began to pray, and they were united to a Christian Church.

So, do not give up! Persevere kindly but firmly. It may be that God shall enable you not only to have your own souls saved, but to be the means of bringing your persecuting parents to the foot of the cross. That such may be the case is our earnest prayer. Amen.

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CHRIST LIFTED UP

NO. 139

A SERMON
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AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.”
John 12:32.

IT was an extraordinary occasion upon which the Savior uttered these words. It was the crisis of the world. We very often speak of the “present crisis of affairs,” and it is very common for persons of every period to believe their own age to be the crisis and turning point of the whole world’s history. They rightly imagine that very much of the future depends upon their present exertions. But they wrongly stretch the thought and imagine that the period of their existence is the very hinge of the history of the world—that it is the crisis. However it may be correct, in a modified sense that every period of time is in some sense a crisis, yet there never was a time which could be truly called a crisis in comparison with the season when our Savior spoke. In the 31st verse, immediately preceding my text, we find in the English translation, “Now is the *judgment* of this world.” But we find in the Greek, “Now is the *crisis* of this world.” The world had come to a solemn crisis—now was the great turning point of the entire world’s history—should Christ die, or should He not? If He would refuse the bitter cup of agony, the world is doomed. If He should pass onward, do battle with the powers of death and hell and come off a victor, then the world is blessed and her future shall be glorious. Shall He succumb? Then is the world crushed and ruined beneath the trail of the old serpent! Shall He conquer? Shall He lead captivity captive and receive gifts for men? Then this world shall yet see times when there shall be “a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” “Now is the crisis of this world!” “The crisis,” He says, “is two-fold: dealing with Satan and men. I will tell you the result of it. ‘Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.’ Fear not that hell shall conquer. I shall cast him out. And on the other hand doubt not that I shall be victorious over the hearts of men. ‘I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.’” Remembering the occasion upon which these words were uttered, we shall now proceed to a discussion of them.

We have three things to notice. *Christ crucified is Christ’s glory.* He calls it a lifting Him up. *Christ crucified the minister’s theme.* It is the minister’s business to lift Christ up in the gospel. *Christ crucified the*

heart's attraction. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." *His own glory—the minister's theme—the heart's attraction.*

I. I begin then—CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION IS CHRIST'S GLORY. He uses the words, "lifted up," to express the manner of His death. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." This He said, signifying what death He should die." But notice the choice of the words to express His death. He does not say, I, if I am crucified, I, if I am hanged on the tree. No, but, "I, if I am lifted up"—and in the Greek there is the meaning of exaltation. "I, if I am exalted—I, if I am lifted on high." He took the outward and visible fashion of the cross, it being a lifting of Him up, to be the type and symbol of the glory with which the cross should invest even Him. "I, if I am lifted up."

Now *the cross of Christ is Christ's glory.* We will show you how. Man seeks to win his glory by the slaughter of others—Christ by the slaughter of Himself! Men seek to get crowns of gold—He sought a crown of thorns! Men think that glory lies in being exalted over others—Christ thought that His glory did lie in becoming "a worm and no man," a scoff and reproach among all who beheld Him! He stooped when He conquered. And He counted that the glory lay as much in the stooping as in the conquest.

Christ was glorified on the cross, we say, first, *because love is always glorious.* If I might prefer any glory, I would ask to be beloved by men. Surely the greatest glory that a man can have among his fellows is not that of mere admiration, when they stare at him as he passes through the street and throng the avenues to behold him as he rides in his triumph—the greatest fame, the greatest glory of a patriot is the love of his country—to feel that young men and maidens, old men and sires are prepared to fall at his feet in love, to give up all they have to serve him who has served them. Christ won more love by the cross than He ever did elsewhere. O Lord Jesus, You would never have been as much loved if You had sat in heaven forever, as You are now loved since You have stooped to death. Not cherubim and seraphim and angels clad in light could ever have loved with hearts so warm as Your redeemed above, or even Your redeemed below. You won love more abundantly by the nail than by Your scepter. Your open side brought You no emptiness of love, for Your people love You with all their hearts! Christ won glory by His cross. He was never so lifted up as when He was cast down. And the Christian will bear witness that though he loves his Master anywhere, yet nothing moves his heart to rapture and vehemence of love like the story of the crucifixion and the agonies of Calvary.

Again—Christ at that time won much glory *by fortitude.* The cross was a trial of Christ's fortitude and strength and therein, it was a garden in which His glory might be planted. The laurels of His crown were sown in

a soil that was saturated with His own blood. Sometimes the ambitious soldier pants for battle because in days of peace he cannot distinguish himself. "Here I sit," he says, "and rust my sword in my scabbard and win no glory. Let me rush to the cannon's mouth. Though some call honor a painted bauble, it may be so, yet I am a soldier and I need it." And he pants for the encounter that he may win glory. Now, in an infinitely higher sense than that poor glory which the soldier gets, Christ looked upon the cross as being His way to honor. "Oh," He said, "now shall be the time of My endurance—I have suffered much, but I shall suffer more and then shall the world see what a strong heart of love I have." How patient is the Lamb, how mighty to endure! Never would Christ have had such plans of praise and such songs of honor as He now wins, if He had avoided the conflict and the battle and the agony. We might have blessed Him for what He is and for what He wished to do. We might have loved Him for the very longings of His heart, but we never could have praised Him for His strong endurance, for His intrepid spirit, for His unconquerable love, if we had not seen Him put to the severe test of crucifixion and the agonies of that awful day. Christ did win glory by His being crucified!

Again—Christ looked upon His crucifixion *as the completion of all His work*, and therefore, He looked upon it as exaltation. The completion of an enterprise is the harvest of its honor. Though thousands have perished in the arctic regions and have obtained fame for their intrepid conduct, yet, my friends, the man who at last discovers the passage is the most of all honored! And though we shall forever remember those bold men who pushed their way through winter in all its might and dared the perils of the deep, yet the man who accomplishes the deed wins more than his share of the glory. Surely the accomplishment of an enterprise is just the point where the honor hangs. And, my Hearers, Christ longed for the cross because He looked for it as the goal of all His exertions. It was to be the place upon which He could say, "It is finished." He could never say, "It is finished," on His throne—but on His cross He did cry it! He preferred the sufferings of Calvary to the honors of the multitude who crowded round about Him. For, preach as He might and bless them as He might and heal them as He might, still was His work undone. He was straitened. He had a baptism to be baptized with and how was He straitened till it was accomplished! "But," He said, "Now I pant for My cross, for it is the top stone of My labor. I long for My sufferings because they shall be the completion of My great work of grace." Brothers and sisters, it is the end that brings the honor. It is the victory that crowns the warrior rather than the battle! And so Christ longed for this, His death, that He might see the completion of His labor. "Yes," He said, "when I am crucified, I am exalted and lifted up."

And, once again—Christ looked upon His crucifixion with the eye of firm faith *as the hour of triumph*. His disciples thought that the cross would be degradation. Christ looked through the outward and visible and beheld the spiritual. “The cross,” He said, “the gallows of My doom, may seem to be cursed with ignominy and the world shall stand round and hiss at the crucified. My name may be forever dishonored as one who died upon the tree. Quibblers and scoffers may forever throw this in the teeth of My friends—that I died with the malefactor. But I look not at the cross as you do. I know its ignominy, but I despise the shame—I am prepared to endure it all. I look upon the cross as the gate of triumph, as the portal of victory! Oh, shall I tell you what I shall behold upon the cross?—Just when My eyes are swimming with the last tear and when My heart is palpitating with its last pang—just when My body is torn with its last thrill of anguish, then My eyes shall see the head of the dragon broken. It shall see hell’s towers dismantled and its castle fallen! My eyes shall see My seed eternally saved. I shall behold the ransomed coming from their prisons. In that last moment of My doom, when My mouth is just preparing for its last cry of, ‘It is finished,’ I shall behold the year of My redeemed. I shall shout My triumph in the delivery of all My beloved! Yes, and I shall then see the world, My own earth conquered and usurpers all dethroned—and I shall behold in vision the glories of the latter days when I shall sit upon the throne of My father, David, and judge the earth, attended with the pomp of angels and the shouts of My beloved!” Yes, Christ saw in His cross the victories of it and therefore, did He pant and long for it as being the place of victory and the means of conquest! “I,” said Jesus, “if I am lifted up from the earth, if I am exalted,” He puts His crucifixion as being His glory! This is the first point of our text.

II. But, now, secondly, CHRIST HAS ANOTHER LIFTING UP, not ignominious but truly honorable! There is a lifting of Him upon the pole of the gospel, in the preaching of the Word! Christ Jesus is to be lifted up every day. For that purpose He came into the world—“That like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,” even so He might, by the preaching of the truth, be lifted up from the earth, “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Christ is THE MINISTER’S GREAT THEME, in opposition to a thousand other things which most men choose. I would prefer that the most prominent feature in my ministry should be the preaching of Christ Jesus. Christ should be most prominent, *not hell and damnation*. God’s ministers must preach God’s terrors as well as God’s mercies—we are to preach the thunder of God’s law. If men will sin, we are to tell them that they must be punished for it. If they will transgress, woe unto the watchman who is ashamed to say, “The Lord comes that takes vengeance.” We would be unfaithful to the

solemn charge which God has given us if we were wickedly to stifle all the threats of God's Word. Does God say, "The wicked shall be cast into hell, with all the nations that forget God?" It is our business to say so! Did the loving Savior talk of the pit of hell that burns, of the worm that never dies and of the fire that can never be extinguished? It is ours to speak as He spoke and not to mince the matter! It is no mercy to men to hide their doom. But, my brothers, terrors never ought to be the prominent feature of a minister's preaching—many old divines thought they would do a great deal of good by preaching thus—I do not believe it! Some souls are awakened and terrified by such preaching—they, however, are but few. Sometimes, right solemnly, the sacred mysteries of eternal wrath must be preached, but far more often let us preach the wondrous love of God! There are more souls won by wooing than by threats! It is not hell, but Christ we desire to preach! O sinners, we are not afraid to tell you of your doom, but we do not choose to be forever dwelling on that doleful theme! We love rather to tell you of Christ and Him crucified! We want to have our preaching rather full of the frankincense of the merits of Christ than of the smoke and fire and terrors of Mount Sinai! We are not come unto Mount Sinai but unto Mount Zion—where milder words declare the will of God and rivers of salvation are abundantly flowing!

Again—the theme of a minister should be Christ Jesus in opposition to *mere doctrine*. Some of my good brothers are always preaching doctrine. Well, they are right in doing so, but I would not care to have as the characteristic of my preaching, only doctrine. I would rather have it said, "He dwelt much upon the person of Christ and seemed best pleased when he began to tell about the atonement and the sacrifice. He was not ashamed of the doctrines; he was not afraid of threats, but he seemed as if he preached the threats with tears in his eyes and the doctrine solemnly, as God's own Word. But when he preached of Jesus, his tongue was loosed and his heart was at liberty!" Brothers, there are some men who preach only doctrine, who are an injury, I believe, to God's church rather than a benefit! I know of men who have set themselves up as umpires over all spirits. They are the men! Wisdom will die with them. If they were once taken away, the great standard of truth would be removed! We do not wonder that they hate the Pope—two of a trade never agree, for they are far more popish than he—they being themselves infallible! I am afraid that very much of the soundness of this age is but a mere sound and is not real—it does not enter into the eyes of the heart, nor affect the being. Brothers, we would rather preach Christ than election! We love election, we love predestination, we love the great doctrines of God's Word, but we had rather preach Christ than preach these! We desire to put Christ over the head of the doctrine—we make the doctrine the throne for Christ to

sit on—but we dare not put Christ at the bottom, and then press Him down and overload Him with the doctrines of His own Word!

And again—the minister ought to preach Christ in opposition to *mere morality*. How many ministers in London could preach as well out of Shakespeare as the Bible, for all they need is a moral maxim? The good man never thinks of mentioning regeneration. He sometimes talks of moral renovation. He does not think of talking about perseverance by grace. No, continuance in well-doing is his perpetual cry. He does not think of preaching, “Believe and be saved.” No—his continual exhortation is, “Good Christian people, say your prayers, and behave well, and by these means you shall enter the kingdom of heaven!” The sum and substance of his gospel is that we can do very well without Christ, that although certainly there is a little amiss in us, yet if we just mend our ways in some little degree, that old text, “except a man be born-again,” need not trouble us. If you want to be made drunkards, if you want to be made dishonest, if you want to be taught every vice in the world—go and hear a moral preacher! These gentlemen, in their attempts to reform and make people moral, are the men that lead them *from* morality! Hear the testimony of holy Bishop Lavington—“We have long been attempting to reform the nation by moral preaching. With what effect? None! On the contrary, we have dexterously preached the people into downright infidelity. We must change our voice! We must preach Christ and Him crucified—nothing but the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.”

And yet one more remark—the minister ought to preach Christ in opposition to some who think they ought to preach *learning*. God forbid we should ever preach against learning! The more of it a man can get, the better for him, and the better for his hearers if he has grace enough to use it well! But there are some who have so much learning that if in the course of their readings they find a very hard word, out comes the pencil-case—they jot it down, to be glorified in the next Sunday morning’s sermon! If they find some outlandish German expression, which, if pulled to pieces, would mean nothing but which looks as if it must be something wonderful—that must always come out—if all the gospel goes to the wall! You ought to pray to God that they may never be allowed to read anything but their Bibles all week because then you might hear something you could understand—but this would not suit his reference! If he could be understood, he would not be a great preacher, for a great preacher, according to the opinion of some, is a man who is called intellectual. That is to say, a man who knows more about the Bible than the Bible knows about itself—a man who can explain all mysteries by his own intellect—a man who smiles at anything like unction and savor, or the influence of God’s Spirit as being mere fanaticism! Intellect, with him, is everything. You sit and hear him, you go out, “Dear me, what a remarka-

ble man he is. I suppose he made something out of the text, but I did not know what it was. He seemed to me to be in a fog, himself, although I admit it was an extremely luminous haze." Then people will go again and be sure to take a pew in *that* church, because they say he is such a clever man, but the real reason is because they cannot understand him! In reading the other day a book of advice to ministers, I found it stated and very gravely, too, by some good old tutor of a college, "Always have one part of your sermon which the vulgar cannot comprehend, because in that way you will have a name for learning and what you say that they *can* understand will impress them the more. By putting in a sentence or two which is incomprehensible, you at once strike their minds as being a superior man and they believe in the weight and the authority of your learning—and therefore they will give credence to the rest which they can comprehend." Now, I hold that is all wrong. Christ wants us not to preach *learning*, but to preach the good word of life in the simplest manner possible. Why, if I could only get lords and ladies to listen to me by preaching to them so that they alone could understand me—they might go and I would not so much as snap my finger for them all! I desire to preach that the servant maid can understand that the coachman can understand that the poor and illiterate may hear readily and gladly receive the word! And mark you, there never will be much good come to the ministry until it is simplified, until our brothers learn one language, which they do not seem to know. Latin, Greek, French, Hebrew and 20 other languages they know! There is one I would recommend to their very serious study—it is called Anglo-Saxon. If they would just try and learn that, it is astonishing what a mighty language they would find it to be to move the hearts of men! Saxon before every language in the world! When every other has died out for lack of power, Saxon will live and triumph with its iron tongue and its voice of steel! We must have the common, plain language in which to address the people. And mark this, we must have Christ lifted up from the earth, Christ crucified, without the gauds and pretensions of learning, without the trappings of attempted eloquence or oratory! If Christ Jesus is earnestly preached, He will draw all men unto Him!

III. AND NOW WE GO TO THE THIRD POINT, WHICH IS, INDEED, THE ESSENCE OF THE TEXT—THE ATTRACTIVE POWER OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST. If Christ is thus preached, thus fully held forth, thus simply proclaimed to the people, the effect will be He will draw all men unto Him! Now, I will show the attracting power of Christ in three or four ways. Christ draws *like a trumpet* attracting men to hear the proclamation. Christ draws *like a net* bringing men out of the sea of sin. Christ draws, also, *with bonds of love*. In the next place, Christ attracts *like a standard*, bringing all the soldiers round Him and in the last place,

Christ draws *like a chariot*. “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto Me.” Now I will try if I can, to explain these points.

First, I said that Christ draws *as a trumpet*. Men have been likely to sound a trumpet to attract an audience to the reading of a proclamation. The people come from their houses at the well-known sound, to listen to what they are desired to know. Now, my brothers, part of the attractive power of the gospel lies in attracting people to hear it. You cannot expect people to be blessed by the preaching of the gospel if they do not hear it! One part of the battle is to get them to listen to its sound. Now, the question is asked in these times, “How are we to get the working classes to listen to the word?” The answer is Christ is His own attraction; Christ is the only trumpet that you need to trumpet Christ! Preach the gospel, and the congregation will come of themselves. The only infallible way of getting a good congregation is to do this. “Oh,” said a Socinian once, to a good Christian minister, “I cannot figure it out. My chapel is always empty, and yours always crammed full. And yet I am sure mine is the more rational doctrine, and you are not by any means as talented a preacher as I am.” “Well,” said the other, “I will tell you the reason why your chapel is empty and mine full. The people have a conscience, and that conscience tells them that what I preach is true, and that what you preach is false, so they will not hear you.” You shall look through the history of this realm ever since the commencement of the days of Protestantism and I will dare to say it without fear of contradiction, that you will almost in every case find that the men who have attracted the greatest mass of people to hear them have been men who were the most evangelical—who preached the most about Christ and Him crucified!

What was there in Whitefield to attract an audience except the simple gospel preached with a vehement oratory that carried everything before it? Oh, it was not his oratory but the *gospel* that drew the people! There is a something about the truth of God that always makes it popular. Tell me if a man preaches the truth, his chapel will be empty, sir, I defy you to prove that! Christ preached His own truth and the common people heard Him gladly and the multitude flocked to listen to Him. My good ministering brother, have you got an empty church? Do you want to fill it? I will give you a good recipe and if you will follow it, you will, in all probability, have your chapel full to the doors! Burn all your manuscripts; that is No. 1. Give up your notes; that is No. 2. Read your Bible and preach it as you find it in the simplicity of its language. And give up all your Latinized English. Begin to tell the people what you have felt in your own heart and beseech the Holy Spirit to make your heart as hot as a furnace for zeal! Then go out and talk to the people. Speak to them like their brother. Be a man among men. Tell them what you have felt and what you know and tell it heartily with a good, bold face. And, my dear

friend, I do not care who you are, you will get a congregation! But if you say, "Now, to get a congregation, I must buy an organ." That will not serve you a bit. "But we must have a good choir." I would not care to have a congregation that comes through a good choir. "No," says another, "but really, I must alter a little my style of preaching." My dear friend, it is not the style of preaching, it is the style of feeling! People sometimes begin to mimic other preachers because they are successful. Why, the worst preachers are those who mimic others whom they look upon as standards! Preach naturally. Preach out of your hearts just what you feel to be true and the old soul-stirring words of the gospel will soon draw a congregation! "Where the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

But if it ended there, what would be the good of it? If the congregation came and listened to the sound and then went away unsaved, of what use would it be? So in the next place, Christ acts *as a net* to draw men unto Him. The gospel ministry is, in God's Word, compared to a fishery. God's ministers are the fishermen—they go to catch souls, as fishermen go to catch fish. How shall souls be caught? They shall be caught by preaching Christ! Just preach a sermon that is full of Christ and throw it to your congregation, as you throw a net into the sea—you need not look where they are, nor try to fit your sermon to different cases. But throw it in and as sure as God's Word is what it is, it shall not return to Him void! It shall accomplish that which He pleases and prosper in the thing whereto He has sent it. The gospel never was unsuccessful when it was preached with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. It is not fine orations upon the death of princes, or the movements of politics which will save souls. If we wish to have sinners saved and to have our churches increased. If we desire the spread of God's kingdom, the only thing whereby we can hope to accomplish the end is the lifting up of Christ, for, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

In the next place, Christ Jesus draws *as the cords of love*. After men are saved, they are still apt to go astray. It needs a cord to reach all the way from a sinner to heaven! And it needs to have a hand pulling at him all the way. Now Christ Jesus is the band of love that draws the saint to heaven. O child of God, you would go astray again if Jesus did not hold you fast! If He did not draw you to Himself, you would still wander. Christian people are like our earth. Our world has two forces—it has one tendency to run off at a tangent from its orbit, but the sun draws it by a centripetal power and attracts it to itself—and so between the two forces it is kept in a perpetual circle. Oh, Christian, you would never walk aright and keep in the orbit of truth if it were not for the influence of Christ perpetually attracting you to the center! You feel, but if you do not always feel, it is still there—you feel an attraction between your heart

and Christ and Christ is perpetually drawing you to Himself, to His likeness, to His character, to His love, to His bosom and in that way you are kept from your natural tendency to fly off and to be lost in the wide fields of sin! Bless God that Christ lifted up draws all His people unto Him in that fashion.

And now, in the next place Christ Jesus is the center of attraction. Even *as a standard* is the center of gathering, we need unity in these days. We are now crying out, "Away with sectarianism." O for unity! There are some of us who truly pant after it. We do not talk about an evangelical alliance—alliances are made between men of different countries. We believe that the phrase, "Evangelical Alliance," is a faulty one—it should be, "Evangelical Union"—*knit together in union*. Why, I am not in alliance with a brother of the Church of England. I would not be in alliance with him if he were ever so good a man! I would be in *union* with him, I would love him with all my heart, but I would not make a mere alliance with him. He never was my enemy, and he never shall be. And, therefore, it is not an alliance I need with him—it is a union! And so with all God's people—they do not care about alliances. They love real union and communion one with another. Now, what is the right way to bring all the churches to union? "We must revise the prayer book," says one. You may revise it, and revise it as long as ever you like, you will never bring some of us to agree to it, for we hate prayer books as such, however near perfection! "Well then, we must revise the doctrines, so that they may meet all classes." You cannot. That is impossible! "Well then, we must revise the discipline." Yes, sweep the Augean stable! And then after that, the mass of us will stand as much aloof as ever. "No, but we must, each of us, make mutual concessions." Indeed, I wonder who will, except the Vicars of Bray, who have no principles at all! For if we have to make mutual concessions, who can be guaranteed that I must not concede a part of what I believe to be true? And that I cannot do, nor can my brother on the opposite side! The only standard of union that can ever be lifted up in England is the cross of Christ! As soon as we shall begin to preach Christ and Him crucified, we shall be all one! We can fight anywhere except at the foot of the cross—there it is that the order goes forth, "sheathe swords"; and those who were bitter combatants before, come and prostrate themselves there, and say, "You dear Redeemer, You have melted us into one!" Oh, my brothers, let us all preach the gospel mightily, and there will be union! The Church of England is becoming more united with Dissenters. Our good friends at Exeter Hall have gone a very long way to bless the world, and uproot the exclusiveness of their own system. As sure as ever they are alive, they have taken the most excellent step in the world to pull down the absurd pretensions of some of their own brethren, to the exclusive claim of being "the Church." I glory and rejoice

in it! I bless God for that movement, and I pray that the day may come when every bishop may do the same. And I do not glory in it merely because I look upon it as the beginning of union, but because of the preaching of the gospel! But at the same time I know this—let their example be followed, and the barriers between Dissenters and the Church of England are not tenable. Even the nationality of Episcopacy must yet come down. If my lord, the bishop of so-and-so, is to have so many thousands a year for preaching to a number of people in Exeter Hall, I have as much right as he has to a state grant, for I serve as many Englishmen as he does! There is no one church in the world that has any right to take a farthing of national money any more than I have! And if there are ten thousand gathered here, it is an unrighteous thing that we should have no subsidy from the state, when a paltry congregation of thirteen and a half in the city of London is to be supported out of national money! The thing cannot be held long. It is impossible—Christ's church will one day reject the patronage of the state. Let all of us begin to preach the gospel, and we shall soon see that the gospel is self-supporting—and that the gospel does not want or need entrenchments of bigotry and narrow-mindedness in order to make it stand! No, we shall say, "Brother, there is my pulpit for you; you are an Episcopalian, preach in my pulpit, you are right welcome.

The Episcopalian will say, "You are a Baptist, and my brother, here is the parish church for you." And I announce that the first chance I get to preach in a parish church, I will do it and risk the consequences! They are our structures, they belong to all England—we can give them to whom we please, and if tomorrow the will of the sovereign people should transfer those edifices to another denomination, there is nothing in the world that can prevent it! But if not, by what law of Christian love is one denomination to shut its pulpit doors against every other? Many of my dear friends in the Episcopal Church are willing to lend their edifices, but they dare not. But mark you—when the gospel is fully preached, all those things will be broken down—or one brother will say, "My dear friend, you preach Christ, and so do I, I cannot shut you out of my pulpit." And another will cry, "I am anxious for the salvation of souls, and so are you! Come into my house, come into my heart, I love you." The only means of unity we shall ever get will be all of us preaching Christ crucified! When that is done—when every minister's heart is in the right place, full of anxiety for souls—when every minister feels that, be he called bishop, presbyter, or preacher—all he wants to do is to glorify God, and win souls to Jesus, then, my dear friends, we can maintain our denominational distinctions, but the great bugbear of bigotry and division will have ceased, and schism will no more be known! For that day I anxiously pray. May God send it in His own time. As far as I am concerned, here is

my hand for every minister of God in creation, and my heart with it—I love all them who love the Lord Jesus Christ! And I feel persuaded that the nearer we all of us come to the one point of putting Christ first, Christ last, Christ midst, and Christ without end—the nearer we shall come to the unity of the one Church of Christ in the bond of holy permanence!

And now I close by noticing the last sweet thought—“I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” Then Christ Jesus will draw all His people to heaven! He says He will draw them unto Himself. He is in heaven! Then *Christ is the chariot* in which souls are drawn to heaven! The people of the Lord are on their way to heaven; they are carried in everlasting arms; and those arms are the arms of Christ. Christ is carrying them up to His own house, to His own throne. By-and-by His prayer—“Father, I will that they, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am,” shall be wholly fulfilled! And it is fulfilling now, for He is like a strong courser drawing His children in the chariot of the covenant of grace unto Himself. Oh, blessed be God! The cross is the plank on which we swim to heaven! The cross is the great covenant transport which will weather out the storms, and reach its desired heaven! This is the chariot, the pillars wherewith are of gold, and the bottom thereof silver—it is lined with the purple of the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ!

And now, poor sinner, I would to God, Christ would pardon you. Remember His death on Calvary; remember His agonies and bloody sweat—all this He did for you—if you feel yourself to be a sinner. Does not this draw you to Him?—

***“Though you are guilty He is good,
He’ll wash your soul in His own blood.”***

You have rebelled against Him, and revolted, but He says, “Return, back-sliding children.” Will not His love draw you? I pray that both may have their power and influence, that you may be drawn to Christ now, and at last be drawn to heaven. May God give a blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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A SIMPLE SERMON FOR SEEKING SOULS NO. 140

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 12, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
Romans 10:13.

IT has been said by an eminent divine that many of us in preaching the word suppose too great knowledge in our hearers. “Very often,” says this divine, “there are in the congregation persons who are totally unacquainted with the great science of divinity. They are entire strangers to the whole system of grace and salvation.” It is proper then, that the preacher should address himself to his hearers sometimes as if they were totally ignorant of his message, and tell it to them as a new thing, going over the whole of it as if he believed them to be ignorant of it, “For,” says this good man, “it is better to suppose too little knowledge, and so to explain the thing clearly, to the mean comprehension, than to suppose too much, and thus to let the ignorant escape without a word of instruction.”

Now, I think I shall not this morning err in his point of view. I shall assume that some of my congregation, at least, are totally unacquainted with the great plan of salvation. And you that know it well and have tried its preciousness will bear with me, I am sure, while I try in the simplest words that human lips can put together to tell the story of how men are lost and how men are saved according to the words of my text by calling upon the name of the Lord.

Well then, we must begin at the beginning. And we must first tell our hearers that inasmuch as our text talks of men being saved, it implies that men *need saving*. And we tell them that if men had been as God created them, they would have needed no saving. Adam in the garden needed no salvation. He was perfect, pure, clean, holy, and acceptable before God. He was our representative. He stood as the representative for all the race, and when he touched the forbidden fruit, and ate of the tree of which God had said, “You shall not eat thereof, or you shall surely die”—when he so transgressed against God, he needed a Savior, and we, his offspring through his sin, are born into this world, *each of us* needing a Savior. We who are now present, must not however throw blame on Adam. No man was ever yet damned for Adam’s sin alone. Children dying in infancy are, without doubt, saved by sovereign grace through the atonement which is in Christ Jesus. No sooner do they close their eyes on earth, being innocent of any actual sin, they at once open them in the bliss of heaven. But you and I are not children. We need not talk just

now of Adam's sins. We have our own to account for and God knows they are enough. Holy Scripture tells us that we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and conscience bears witness to the same truth.

We have all broken the great commands of God and in consequence thereof the just God is bound in justice to punish us for the sins we have committed. Now, my brethren, it is because you and I have broken the divine law and are subject to the divine wrath that we stand in need of mercy. Every one of us therefore—every one of us if we would be happy, if we would dwell in heaven with God forever—must be saved.

But there is great confusion in the minds of men as to what being saved is. Allow me, then, to say that salvation means two things. It means in the first place, our escaping from the punishment of sins committed. And it means in the next place, the escaping from the *habit* of sin, so that in the future we shall not live as we have lived. The way in which God saves you is twofold—He finds man a sinner breaking His law. He says, "I forgive you, I will not punish you. I have punished Christ instead of you—you shall be saved." But that is only half the work. He says in the next place—"man, I will not let you go on sinning as you have been likely to do. I will give you a new heart which shall subdue your evil habits. So that whereas you have been the slave of sin you shall be free to serve Me. Come away, you are not going to serve that black master of yours any more. You must leave that demon—I will have you to be My child, My servant. You say, 'I cannot do so.' Come, I will give you grace to do it. I give you grace to break off drunkenness, grace to renounce your swearing, grace to give up Sabbath-breaking. I give you grace to run in the ways of My commandments and to find them to be a delightful road." Salvation, then, I say, consists of two things—*deliverance* on the one hand from the habit of *living in enmity with God*; and, on the other hand, *deliverance from the punishment* annexed to transgression.

The great subject of this morning, which I shall attempt to dwell upon in very plain language, attempting no flights of oratory whatever—is how men may be saved. That is the one great question. Let them remember what to be saved is. It is to be made Christians to have new thoughts, new minds, new hearts and then, it is to have a new home forever at God's right hand in bliss. How may they be saved? "What must I do to be saved?" is a cry springing from many lips here this morning. The answer of my text is this—"Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I shall first try to explain the text a little—*explanation*. Secondly, I shall try to clear the text from some errors about salvation which are very popular—that will be *refutation*. And then, thirdly, I shall press the usefulness of my text upon your minds—that will be *exhortation*. *Explanation, refutation, exhortation*—you will remember the points, and may God impress them upon your minds!

I. First, then, EXPLANATION—What is here meant by calling upon the name of the Lord? And I tremble at this very moment when I try to ex-

plain my text for I feel it is very easy to darken words without knowledge. Full many a time has a preacher rendered Scripture dark by his explanations instead of making it brighter. Many a preacher has been like a painted window, shutting out the light instead of admitting it. There is nothing whatever puzzles me more and tries my mind more than the answer to that simple question, What is faith? What is believing? What is calling upon the name of the Lord? In order to get the true sense of this, I turned to my concordance and looked up the passages where the same word is employed. And so far as I can judge, I may state from the authority of Scripture, that the word “call” signifies *worship*. So I might translate it thus—“Whoever *worships* God shall be saved.” But you must let me explain that word, “worship” according to the Scriptural meaning of it in order to explain the word “call.”

To call upon the name of the Lord, in the first place, signifies to *worship* God. You will find in the book of Genesis that, “when men began to multiply upon the face of the earth, then began men to *call* upon the name of the Lord.” That is they began to *worship* God. They built altars in His name. They certified their belief in the sacrifice that was to come by offering a typical sacrifice upon the altar they had built. They bowed their knee in prayer. They lifted their voice in sacred song and cried, “Great is Jehovah, Creator, Preserver, let Him be praised, world without end.” Therefore—whoever he may be in the whole wide world who is enabled by grace to worship God, in God’s way, shall be saved. If you worship Him by a Mediator, having faith in the atonement of the cross; if you worship Him by humble prayer and hearty praise, your worship is a proof that you shall be saved. You could not thus worship unless you had grace within your heart—and your faith and grace are proof that you shall have glory. Whoever, then, in lowly devotion, on the green turf, beneath the wide-spreading branches of a tree, beneath the vault of God’s heaven, or in God’s house, or out of it—whoever shall worship God with a pure heart fervently, looking for acceptance through the atonement of Christ, and meekly casting himself upon the mercy of God, shall be saved. So stands the promise.

But lest any man should run away with a mistaken idea of what worship is, we must just explain a little further. The word “call,” in holy Scripture signifies *prayer*. You remember the case of Elijah—when the prophets of Baal try to get rain from the false god, he said, “I will call upon God”—that is to say, “I will pray to God that He may send the rain.” Now, prayer is a sure sign of divine life within. Whoever prays to God through Christ, with sincere prayer shall be saved. Oh, I can remember how this text cheered me once. I felt the weight of sin, but I did not know the Savior. I thought God would blast me with His wrath, and smite me with His hot displeasure! From chapel to chapel I went to hear the word preached, but never a gospel sentence did I hear. But this one text just preserved me from what I believe I should have been driven to—the

commission of suicide through grief and sorrow. It was this sweet word—“Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Well, I thought, I cannot believe on Christ as I could wish; I cannot find pardon, but I know I may call upon His name. I know I pray. Yes and pray with groans, and tears, and sighs, day and night. And if I am ever lost, I will plead that promise—“Oh God You said he that calls upon Your name shall be saved. I did call. Will you cast me away? I did plead Your promise. I did lift up my heart in prayer. Can You be just and yet damn the man who did really pray?” Mark that sweet thought—prayer is the certain forerunner of salvation. sinner, you cannot pray and perish. Prayer and perishing are two things that never go together. I ask you not what your prayer is. It may be a groan, it may be a tear, a wordless prayer, or a prayer in broken English, ungrammatical and harsh to the ear—but if it is a prayer from the inmost heart, you shall be saved. Or else this promise is a lie. As surely as you pray—whoever you may be—whatever your past life—whatever the transgressions in which you have indulged—though they are the foulest which pollute mankind, yet if from your heart you have learned to pray—

**“Prayer is the breath of God in man
Returning from where it came.”**

And you can not perish with God’s breath in you! “Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!”

But the word “call” signifies a little more, it signifies *trust*. A man cannot call upon the name of the Lord unless he trusts in that name. We must have reliance upon the name of Christ or else we have not called aright. Hear me, then, poor tried sinner. You have come here this morning sensible of your guilt, awakened to your danger. Here is your remedy. Christ Jesus the Son of God became a man. He was “born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.” He did this to save sinners such as you are. Will you believe this? Will you *trust* your soul to it? Will you say, “Sink or swim, Christ Jesus is my hope; and if I perish I will perish with my arms around His cross, crying—

**‘Nothing in my hands I bring
Simply to the cross I cling’?”**

Poor soul, if you can do that, you will be saved. Come, now, no good works of your own are needed—no sacraments. All that is asked of you is this and that *He gives you*. You are nothing. Will you take Christ to be everything? Come, you are black in sin, will you be washed? Will you get down on your knees and cry, “Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner—not for anything I have done, or can do—but for His dear sake, whose blood streamed from His hands and feet, in whom alone I trust”? Why sinner the solid pillars of the universe shall totter rather than you should perish! Yes, heaven should weep a vacant throne, and an extinguished God-head rather than the promise should be violated in any case in the world! He that trusts in Christ, calling on His name, shall be saved.

But once more and then I think I shall have given you the whole Scripture meaning of this. Calling on the name of the Lord signifies *professing His name*. You remember what Ananias said to Saul, afterwards called Paul, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.” Now, sinner if you would be obedient to Christ’s word, Christ’s word says, “He that believes and is *immersed*, shall be saved.” Mark, I have translated the word. King James would not have it translated. I dare not be unfaithful to my knowledge of God’s word. If it means sprinkle, let our brethren translate it “sprinkle.” But they dare not do that—they know they have nothing in all classical language that would ever justify them in doing that, and they have not the impudence to attempt it. But I dare translate it—“He that believes and is *immersed*, shall be saved.” And though immersion is nothing, yet God requires of men who believe that they should be immersed, in order to make a *profession* of their belief. *Immersion is nothing*, I repeat. In salvation, it is only the *profession* of salvation. But God requires that every man that puts his trust in the Savior should be immersed, as the Savior was, in order to the fulfillment of righteousness. Jesus went meekly down from Jordan’s shore to be immersed beneath the waves. And so let every believer be baptized in His name. Now some of you draw back from the thought of making a profession. “No,” you say, “we will believe and be secret Christians.” Hear you this, then—“If any man be ashamed of Me and of My words in this generation, of him will I be ashamed, when I shall come in the glory of My Father, with all His holy angels.” I will repeat a truism. Not one of you in your lives ever knew a secret Christian, and I will prove it to you. If you knew a man to be a Christian, it could not be a secret, for if it had been a secret, how came you to know it? Then, as you never knew a secret Christian, you are not justified in believing there is such a one! You must come out and make a profession. What would Her Majesty think of her soldiers, if they should swear they were loyal and true, and were to say—“Your Majesty, we prefer not to wear these uniforms; let us wear the dress of civilians! We are right honest men and upright, but we do not care to stand in your ranks, acknowledged as your soldiers. We had rather slink into the enemy’s camp, and into your camps, too, and not wear anything that would mark us as being your soldiers!” Ah, some of you do the same with Christ. You are going to be secret Christians, are you, and slink into the devil’s camp, and into Christ’s camp, but acknowledged by none? Well, you must take the risk of it, if you will be so. But I should not like to risk it. It is a solemn threat—“of him will I be ashamed when I come in the glory of My Father, and all His holy angels with Me”! It is a solemn thing, I say, when Christ says, “Except a man take up his cross and follow Me, he cannot be My disciple.” Now, then, I claim of every sinner here whom God has awakened to feel his need of a Savior, *obedience* to the command of Christ in this point, as well as in every other. Hear the way of salvation—worship, prayer, faith, *profession*.

And the profession, if men would be obedient, if they would follow the Bible, must be done in Christ's way by a baptism in water, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. God requires this. And though men are saved without baptism, and multitudes fly to heaven who are never washed in the stream—*though baptism is not saving*—yet if men would be saved, they must not be disobedient. And inasmuch as God gives a command, it is mine to enforce it. Jesus said, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature—he that believes, and is immersed, shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned."

Here, then, is the explanation of my text. No churchman [member of state church] here can object to my interpretation. The Church of England holds dipping; it only says if children are weak they are to be sprinkled. And it is marvelous what a many weakly children there have been born lately! I am astonished to find any of you alive, after finding that so much weakness has everywhere existed! The dear little ones are so tender that a few drops suffice instead of the dipping which their own church enforces. I would that all churchmen were better churchmen; if they would be more consistent with their own articles of faith, they would be more consistent with Scripture; and if they were a little more consistent with some of the instructions of their own church, they would be a little more consistent with themselves! If your children are weak, you can let them be sprinkled; but if you are good churchmen you will immerse them, if they can bear it.

II. But now, the second point is REFUTATION. There are some popular errors with regard to salvation which need to be cured by refutation. My text says, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Now, one idea which conflicts with my text is this, *that a priest or a minister is absolutely necessary to assist men in salvation*. That idea is current in other places besides the Roman Catholic Church. There are many, alas, too many, who make a dissenting minister as much their priest as the Catholic makes his priest his helper. There are many who imagine that salvation cannot be accomplished except in some indefinable and mysterious way—and the minister and the priest are mixed up with it. Hear, then—if you had never seen a minister in your lives, if you had never heard the voice of the bishop of the church, or an elder thereof—yet if you did call on the name of the Lord, your salvation would be quite as sure without one as with one. Men cannot call upon a God they do not know. The necessity of a preacher lies in *telling* what the way of salvation is, for how can they hear without a preacher, and how can they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?

But the preacher's office goes no further than just the *telling* of the message and after we have told it, God, the Holy Spirit must apply it, for further we cannot go. Oh, take care of priestcraft; take care of man-craft, of minister-craft, of clergy-craft! All God's people are clergy—we are all

God's *cleros*, all His clergy if we have been anointed with the Holy Spirit and are saved. There never ought to have been a distinction between clergy and laity. We are all clergy who love the Lord Jesus Christ and you are as much fit to preach the gospel, if God has given you the ability and called you to the work by His Spirit as any man alive. No priestly hand, no hand of Presbyterian—which means priest written large—no ordination of men is necessary! We stand upon the rights of manhood to speak what we believe, and next to that we stand upon the call of God's Spirit in the heart bidding us testify His truth. But, brethren, neither Paul, nor an angel from heaven, nor Apollos, nor Cephas can help you in *salvation*. It is not *of* man, neither *by* men; and neither Pope, nor Archbishop, nor Bishop, nor priest, nor minister, nor anyone else has any grace to give to others! We must each of us go ourselves to the fountain head, pleading this promise—"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord Jesus, shall be saved." If I were shut up in the mines of Siberia where I could never hear the gospel; if I did call upon the name of Christ the road is just as straight without the minister as with him, and the path to heaven is just as clear from the wilds of Africa and from the dens of the prison and the dungeon, as it is from the sanctuary of God. Nevertheless, for *edification* all Christians should love the ministry, though not for *salvation*! The word of God is sweet to them, and "beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of peace."

Another very common error is that a good dream is a most splendid thing in order to save people. Some of you do not know the extent to which this error prevails. I happen to know it. It is believed among many persons that if you dream that you see the Lord in the night, you will be saved. And if you can see Him on the cross, or if you think you see some angels, or if you dream that God says to you, "You are forgiven," all is well. But if you do not have a very nice dream you cannot be saved. So some people think. Now, if it is so, the sooner we all begin to eat opium the better, because there is nothing that makes people dream so much as that, and the best advice I could give would be—let every minister distribute opium very largely, and then his people would all dream themselves into heaven. But out with that rubbish! There is nothing in it. Dreams are the disordered fabrics of a wild imagination; they are the tottering often of the fair pillars of a grand conception—how can they be the means of salvation? You know Rowland Hill's good answer. I must quote it, in default of a better. When a woman pleaded that she was saved because she dreamed, he said, "Well, my good woman, it is very nice to have good dreams when you are asleep, but I want to see how you act when you are awake, for if your conduct is not consistent in religion when you are awake, I will not give a snap of the finger for your dreams." Ah, I do marvel that any person ever should go to such a depth of ignorance as to tell me the stories that I have heard myself about dreams! Poor dear creatures, when they were sound asleep they saw the gates of

heaven opened, and a white angel came and washed their sins away, and then they saw that they were pardoned; and since then they have never had a doubt or a fear. It is time that you should begin to doubt, then; very good time that you should, for if that is all the hope you have, it is a poor one! Remember it is, “Whoever *calls* upon the name of God,” not whoever *dreams* about Him! Dreams may do good. Sometimes people have been frightened out of their senses in them, and they were better out of their senses than they were in, for they did more mischief when they were in their senses than they did when they were out. And so the dreams did well in that sense. Some people, too, have become alarmed by dreams. But to trust to them is to trust to a shadow, to build your hopes on bubbles, scarcely needing a puff of wind to burst them into nothingness. Oh, remember, you need no vision, no marvelous appearance! If you have had a vision or a dream, you need not despise it; it may have benefited you—but do not *trust* in it! And if you have had none, remember that it is the mere *calling upon God’s name* to which the promise is appended.

And now, once again, there are others, very good sorts of people too, that have been laughing while I was talking about dreams. And now it is our turn to laugh at them. There are some people who think they must have some very wonderful kind of *feelings*, or else they cannot be saved. Some most extraordinary thoughts such as they never had before, or else certainly they cannot be saved. A woman once applied to me for admission to church membership. I asked her whether she had ever had a change of heart. She said, “Oh yes sir, such a change as you know,” she said, “I felt it across the chest so singular, sir, and when I was a praying one day I felt as if I did not know what was the matter with me, I felt so different. And when I went to the chapel, sir, one night, I came away and felt so different from what I felt before, so light.” “Yes,” I said “light-headed, my dear soul, that is what you felt but nothing more, I am afraid.” The good woman was sincere enough. She thought it was all right with her, because something had affected her lungs, or in some way stirred her physical frame. “No,” I hear some of you say, “people cannot be as stupid as this.” I assure you that if you could read the hearts of this present congregation, you would find there are hundreds here that have no better hope of heaven than that—for I am dealing with a very popular objection just now. “I thought,” said one addressing me one day, “I thought when I was in the garden, surely Christ could take my sins away, just as easily as He could move the clouds. Do you know, sir, in a moment or two the clouds were all gone, and the sun was shining. Thought I to myself, the Lord is blotting out my sin.” Such a ridiculous thought as that, you say, cannot occur often. I tell you it does, very frequently indeed. People get to supposing that the veriest nonsense in all the earth is a manifestation of divine grace in their hearts. Now, the only feeling I ever want to have is just this—I want to feel that I am a sinner,

and that Christ is my Savior. You may keep your visions, and ecstasies, and raptures, and dancing to yourselves! The only feeling that I desire to have is deep repentance, and humble faith. And if, poor sinner, you have got that, you are saved! Why, some of you believe that before you can be saved there must be a kind of electric shock, some very wonderful thing that is to go all through you from head to foot! Now hear this, "The word is near you, in your mouth, and in your heart. If you do with your heart believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and with your mouth do confess, you shall be saved." What do you need with all this nonsense of dreams and thoughts? All that is needed is that as a guilty sinner I should come and cast myself on Christ. That done, the soul is safe—and all the visions in the universe could not make it safer!

And now, I have one more error to try to rectify. Among very poor people—and I have visited some of them, and know what I say to be true; and there are some here, and I will speak to them—among the very poor and uneducated, there is a very current idea that somehow or other salvation is connected with learning to read and write. You smile, perhaps, but I know it is true. Often has a poor woman said, "Oh, sir, this is no good to poor ignorant creatures like us; there is no hope for me, sir; I cannot read. Do you know, sir, I don't know a letter? I think if I could read a bit, I might be saved, but ignorant as I am, I do not know how I can—for I have got no understanding, sir." I have found this in the country districts, too, among people who might learn to read if they liked. And there are none but can unless they are lazy. And yet they sit down in cold indifference about salvation under the notion that the *parson* could be saved, for he reads a chapter so nicely; that the *clerk* could be saved, for he said, "Amen" so well; that the *squire* could be saved, for he knew a great deal, and had a vast many books in his library; but that *they* could not be saved, for they did not know anything, and that therefore it was impossible! Now, have I one such poor creature here? I will speak plainly to you. My poor friend, you do not need to know much to go to heaven. I would advise you to know as much as ever you can—do not be backward in trying to learn—but in regard to going to heaven, the way is so plain that, "The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." Do you feel that you have been guilty, that you have broken God's commandments? Do you feel that you have not kept His Sabbath, that you have taken His name in vain? Do you feel that you have not loved your neighbor as yourself, nor your God with all your heart? Well, if you feel it, Christ died for such as you! He died upon the cross, and was punished in *your* place, and He tells you to believe it. If you want to hear more about it, come to the house of God and listen, and we will try to lead you to something else. But remember, all you need to know to get to heaven is the two things that begin with S—Sin and Savior. Do you feel your *sin*? Christ is your *Savior*; trust to Him; pray to Him, and as sure as you are here now, and I am talking to you, you will one day be in heaven! I will

tell you two prayers to pray. First, pray this prayer—"Lord, show me myself." That is an easy one for you: Lord, show me *myself*, show me my *heart*, show me my *guilt*, show me my *danger*; Lord, show me *myself*. And, when you have prayed that prayer, and God has answered it, (and remember, He hears prayer)—when He has answered it, and shown you yourself, here is another prayer for you—"Lord, show me *Yourselves*—Show me *Your* work, *Your* love, *Your* mercy, *Your* cross, *Your* grace." Pray that and those are about the only prayers you need to pray to get to heaven with—"Lord, show me myself." "Lord, show me Yourself." You do not need to know much, then; you need not spell to get to heaven! You need not be able to speak English to get to heaven! The ignorant and rude are welcome to the cross of Christ and salvation!

Excuse my thus answering these popular errors. I answer them because they *are* popular, and popular among some who are present. O men and women, hear the word of God once more! "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Man of eighty, child of eight, young man and maiden, rich, poor, literate, illiterate—to you is this preached in all its fullness and freeness—yes, to every creature under heaven—"Whoever" (and that shuts out none)—"Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

III. And now I have nothing to do except to finish with EXHORTATION. My exhortation is, I entreat you by the name of God believe the message which this day I declare from God's word. Do not turn away from me because the message is simply delivered. Do not reject it because I have chosen to preach it simply and plainly to the poor. Hear again—"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I beseech you believe this! Does it seem hard to believe? Nothing is too hard for the Most High. Do you say, "I have been so guilty, I cannot think God will save me"? Hear Jehovah speak—"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways; as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are My thoughts above your thoughts, My ways above your ways." Do you say, "I am excluded; surely you cannot mean that He would save me"? LISTEN—it says—"Whoever"—"Whoever" is a great wide door, and lets in big sinners! Oh, surely, if it says, "whoever," you are not excluded if you call—that is the point.

And now I must plead with you, and I will use a few reasons to induce you to believe this truth. They shall be Scripture reasons. May God bless them to you, sinner. If you call on Christ's name you will be saved. I will tell you first, you will be saved because *you are elect*. No man ever called on Christ's name yet who was not elect! That doctrine of election which puzzles many, and frightens more, never need do so; if you believe, you are elect. If you call on the name of Christ, you are elect; if you feel yourself to be a sinner, and put your trust in Christ you are elect. Now, the elect must be saved, for them there is no Hell. God has predestinated them unto eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any

pluck them out of Christ's hands. God does not choose men, women, children, and then cast them away! He does not elect them, and then cast them into the pit of Hell! Now, you are elect—you could not have called on the name of Christ if you had not been elect; your election is the cause of your calling, and inasmuch as you have called, and do call upon the name of God, you are God's elect! And from His book neither death nor Hell can ever erase your name! 'Tis an omnipotent decree; Jehovah's will be done! His chosen must be saved, though earth and Hell oppose! His strong hand shall break their ranks, and lead His people through. You are one of these people; you shall at last stand before His throne, and see His smiling face in glory everlasting because you are elect.

Now, another reason. If you call upon the name of the Lord you shall be saved because you are *redeemed*. Christ has *bought* you, and *paid* for you—poured out the hottest of His heart's blood to buy your ransom—split His heart, and shattered it to splinters to buy your soul from wrath. You are a bought one; you know it not but I see the blood-mark on your brow. If you call on His name, though you have as yet no comfort, yet Christ has called you His own! Ever since that day when He said, "It is finished"—Christ has said, "My delight is in him, for I have bought him with My blood." And because you are bought, you shall never perish. Not one of Jesus' blood-bought ones was ever lost yet. Howl, howl, O Hell, but howl you cannot over the damnation of a redeemed soul. Out with the horrid doctrine that men are bought with blood, and yet are damned—it is too diabolical for me to believe! I know that what the Savior did, He did, and if He did redeem, He did redeem, and those redeemed by Him are positively redeemed from death, and Hell, and wrath! I can never bring my mind to the unrighteous idea that Christ was punished for a man, and that such a man will be punished again. I never could see how Christ could stand in a man's place and be punished for him, and yet that man be punished again. No, inasmuch as you call on God's name, there is proof that Christ is your ransom. Come, rejoice! If He was punished, God's justice cannot demand a double vengeance—first at the bleeding Surety's hands, and then again at yours! Come, soul, put your hand upon the Savior's head and say, "Blessed Jesus, You were punished for me." Oh God, I am not afraid of Your vengeance; when my hand is on the atonement, You must smite me through Your Son. Smite if You will, but You cannot, for You have smitten Him, and surely You will not smite again for the same offense? What? Did Christ at one tremendous draught of love drink my damnation dry, and shall I be damned after that? God forbid! What? Shall God be unrighteous—forget the Redeemer's work for us, and let the Savior's blood be shed in vain? Not Hell itself has ever indulged the thought which has only been worthy of the men who are traitors to God's truth! Yes, brothers and sisters, if you *call* on

Christ, if you *pray*, if you *believe*—you may be quite sure of salvation—for you are redeemed, and the redeemed will not perish!

Shall I tell you one more reason? Believe this truth—it must be true—for you call upon the name of God. “In My Father’s house,” says Christ, “there are many mansions,” and there is one there for you. Christ has prepared a house and a crown, from before the foundation of the world, for all them that believe. Come! Do you think Christ will prepare a house, and not carry the inhabitants there? Will He make crowns, and then lose the heads that are to wear them? God forbid! Turn your eyes towards heaven; there is a seat there that must be filled, and must be filled by *you!* There is a crown there that must be worn, and must be worn by *you!* Oh, be of good cheer—heaven’s preparation shall not be too abundant—He shall make room for those that believe, and because He has made that room, those that believe shall come there! Oh, would to God I might know that some soul here could lay hold on this promise! Where are you? Are you standing away among the crowd there; or sitting here in the body of the hall; or in the topmost gallery? Are you feeling your sins? Do you shed tears in secret on account of them? Do you lament your iniquities? Oh, take His promise—“Whoever (*sweet whoever!*)—whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” The devil says it is of no use for you to call. You have been a drunkard; tell him it says, “Whoever.” “No,” says the evil spirit, “it is of no use for *you*, you have never been to hear a sermon, or been in the house of God these last ten years.” Tell him it says, “WHOEVER.” “No,” says Satan, “remember the sins of last night, and how you have come up to the Music Hall stained with lust?” Tell the devil it says, “WHOEVER,” and that it is a foul lie of his that you can call on God and yet be lost! No, tell him that—

***“If all the sins that men have done
In thought, or word, or deed,
Since worlds were made or time begun,
Could meet on one poor head,
The blood of Jesus Christ alone
For all this guilt could well atone.”***

Oh lay this to your heart! May God’s Spirit do it! “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

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**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 19, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;
that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”
2 Corinthians 5:21.***

A BOOK is the expression of the thoughts of the writer. The book of nature is an expression of the thoughts of God. We have God's terrible thoughts in the thunder and lightning, God's loving thoughts in the sunshine and the balmy breeze. We have God's bounteous, prudent, careful thoughts in the waving harvest and in the ripening meadow. We have God's brilliant thoughts in the wondrous scenes which are beheld from mountaintop and valley. And we have God's most sweet and pleasant thoughts of beauty in the little flowers that bloom at our feet. But you will remark that God has in nature given most prominence to those thoughts that needed to have the pre-eminence. He has not given us broad acres overspread with *flowers*, for they were not needed in such abundance. He has spread the fields with corn, that thus the absolute necessities of life might be supplied. We needed most of the thoughts of His providence. And He has quickened our industry, so that God's providential care may be read as we ride along the roads on every side. Now God's book of grace is just like His book of nature. It is His thoughts written out. This great book, the Bible, this most precious volume, is the heart of God made legible! It is the gold of God's love beaten out into gold leaf so that therewith our thoughts might be plated and we might also have golden, good and holy thoughts concerning Him. And you will mark that, as in nature, so in grace—the most necessary is the most prominent! I see in God's word a rich abundance of flowers of glorious eloquence. Often I find a prophet marshalling his words like armies for might and like kings for majesty. But far more frequently I read simple declarations of the truths of God. I see here and there a brilliant thought of beauty but I find whole fields of plain instructive doctrine which is food for the soul. And I find whole chapters full of Christ which is divine manna whereon the soul feeds. I see starry words to make the Scriptures brilliant, sweet thoughts to make them fair, great thoughts to make them impressive, terrible thoughts to make them awful. But necessary thoughts, instructive thoughts, saving thoughts—are far more frequent—because far more necessary. Here and there a bed of flowers, but broad acres of living corn of the gospel of the grace of God! You must excuse me, then, if I very frequently dwell on the whole topic of salvation. But last Sabbath [#140 – A Simple Sermon for Seeking Souls] I brought you one shock of this wheat in the fashion of Christ's promise, which says, “He who calls on the name of the Lord, shall be saved.” And then I sought to show how men might be saved. I bring you now another shock cut down in the same field, teaching you the great philosophy of salva-

tion, the hidden mystery, the great secret, the wonderful discovery which is brought to light by the gospel—how God is just and yet the justifier of the *ungodly*. Let us read the text again and then at once proceed to discuss it. I intend to do today, as I did last Sunday. I shall just be as simple as ever I can. And I shall not attempt one single flight of eloquence or oratory, even if I am capable of it. But let us just go along the ground so that every simple soul may be able to understand—“For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Note the doctrine; the use of it; the enjoyment of it.

I. First, THE DOCTRINE. There are three persons mentioned here. *He* (that is God) has made *Him* (that is Christ) who knew no sin, to be sin for *us* (sinners) that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Before we can understand the plan of salvation, it is necessary for us to know something about the three persons and, certainly, unless we understand them in some measure, salvation is impossible to us!

1. Here is first, GOD. Let every man know what God is. God is a very different Being from what some of you suppose. The God of heaven and of earth—the Jehovah of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob, Creator and Preserver, the God of Holy Scripture and the God of all grace, is not the God that some men make unto themselves and worship. There are men in this so called Christian land who worship a god who is no more God than Venus or Bacchus! A god made after their own hearts. A god not fashioned out of stone or wood but fashioned from their own thoughts—out of baser stuff than the heathen attempted to make a god of!

The God of Scripture has three great attributes and they are all three implied in the text. The God of Scripture is a *sovereign* God. That is, He is a God who has absolute authority and absolute power to do exactly as He pleases. Over the head of God there is no law. Upon His arms there is no necessity. He knows no rule but His own free and mighty will. And though He cannot be unjust and cannot do anything but good, yet is His nature absolutely free. Goodness is the freedom of God’s nature. God is not to be controlled by the will of man, nor the desires of man, or by fate in which the superstitious believe. He is a God doing as He wills in the armies of heaven and in this lower world. He is a God, too, who gives no account of His matters. He makes His creatures just what He chooses to make them and does with them just as He wills. And if any of them resent His acts, He says unto them—“But, O man, who are you that reply against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why have You made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?” God is good. But God is sovereign, absolute, knowing. There is nothing or no one who can control Him. The monarchy of this world is no constitutional and limited monarch—it is not tyrannical but it is absolutely in the hands of an all-wise God. But mark, it is in no hands but His—no cherubim, no seraphim can assist God in the dispensation of His government—

***“He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.”***

He is the God of Predestination. The God upon whose absolute will the hinge of fate turns—

**“Chained to His throne, a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With every angel’s form and size,
Drawn by the eternal pen.
His providence unfolds the book,
And makes His councils shine,
Each opening leaf and every stroke,
Fulfils some deep design.”**

This is the God of the Bible. This is the God whom we adore—no weak, cowardly God who is controlled by the will of men, who cannot steer the boat of providence, but a God unalterable, infinite, unerring. This is the God we worship. A God as infinitely above His creatures as the highest thought can fly. And still higher than that!

But, again, the God who is here mentioned is a *God of infinite justice*. That He is a sovereign God, I prove from the words that He *has made* Christ to be sin. He could not have done it if He had not been sovereign. That He is a just God, I infer from my text—seeing that the way of salvation is a great plan of satisfying justice. And we now declare that the God of Holy Scripture is a God of inflexible justice. He is not the God whom some of you adore. You adore a god who winks at great sins. You believe in a god who calls your crimes peccadilloes and little faults. Some of you worship a god who does not punish sin. He is so weakly merciful and so mercilessly weak that he passes by transgression and iniquity and never enacts a punishment. You believe in a god, who, if man sins, does not demand punishment for his offense. You think that a few good works of your own will pacify him. You think that he is so weak a ruler that a few good words uttered before him in prayer will win sufficient merit to reverse the sentence. Your god is no God! He is as much a false god as the god of the Greeks, or of ancient Nineveh! The God of Scripture is one who is inflexibly severe in justice and will by no means clear the guilty! “The Lord is slow to anger and great in power. And will not at all acquit the wicked.” The God of Scripture is a ruler, who, when His subjects rebel, marks their crime and never forgives them until He has punished it, either upon them, or upon their substitute. He is not like the god of some dissenters who believe in a god without an atonement, with only some little show upon a cross, which was not, as they say, a real suffering of sin. Their god, the god of the Socinian, just blots out sin without exacting any punishment. He is not the God of the Scriptures! The God of the Bible is as severe as if He were unmerciful and as just as if He were not gracious! And yet He is as gracious and as merciful as if He were not just—yes, more so!

And one more thought here concerning God, or else we cannot establish our discourse upon a sure basis. The God of Scripture is a *God of grace*; think not that I am now contradicting myself. The God who is inflexibly severe and never pardons sin without punishment is yet a God of illimitable love! Although as a ruler He will chastise, yet, as the Father-God, He loves to bestow His blessing. “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies. But had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” God is love in its highest degree. He is love rendered more than love. Love is not God but God is love! He is full of grace, He is the plenitude of mercy—He delights in mercy! As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts of love above our

thoughts of despair—and His ways of grace above our ways of fear. This God, in whom these three great attributes harmonize—illimitable sovereignty, inflexible justice and unfathomable grace—these three make up the main attributes of the one God of heaven and earth whom Christians worship! It is this God before whom we must appear. It is He who has made Christ to be sin for us, though He knew no sin.

2. Thus, we have brought the first person before you. The second person of our text is *the Son of God*—Christ, who knew no sin. He is the Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds—begotten, not made. Being of the same substance with the Father, co-equal, co-eternal, and co-existent. Is the Father Almighty? So is the Son Almighty. Is the Father infinite? So is the Son infinite. He is very God of very God—having a dignity not inferior to the Father but being equal to Him in every respect—God over all, blessed forevermore. Jesus Christ is also the son of Mary, a man like unto ourselves. A man subject to all the infirmities of human nature, except the infirmities of sin; a man of suffering, and of woe, of pain and trouble, of anxiety and fear; a man of trouble, and of doubt, of temptation and of trial, of weakness, and death. He is a man just as we are; bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Now the person we wish to introduce to you is this complex being, God and man. Not God humanized, not man Deified, but God, purely, essentially God. Man, purely man; man, not more than man; God, not less than God—the two standing in a sacred union together, the God-Man. Of this God in Christ, our text says that He knew no sin. It does not say that He did not sin. That we know—but it says more than that. He did not *know* sin. He knew not what sin was! He saw it in others but He did not know it by *experience*. He was a perfect stranger to it. It is not merely said that He did not take sin into His heart, but He did not *know* it. It was no acquaintance of His. He was the acquaintance of grief. But He was not the acquaintance of *sin*. He knew no sin of any kind—no sin of thought, no sin of birth, no original, no actual transgression. No sin of lips or of hand did ever Christ commit. He was pure, perfect, and spotless! Like His own divinity, without spot or blemish, or any such thing, this gracious person is He who is spoken of in the text! He was a person utterly incapable of committing anything that was wrong. Lately it has been asserted by some ill-judged ones, that Christ was capable of sin. I think it was Irving who started some such idea that if Christ was not capable of sinning, He could not have been capable of virtue, “for,” they say, “if a man must necessarily be good, there is no virtue in his goodness.” Away with their ridiculous nonsense! Is not God necessarily good? And who dares deny that God is virtuous? Are not the glorified spirits in heaven necessarily pure? And yet are they not holy because of that very necessity? Are not the angels, now that they are confirmed, necessarily faultless? And shall anyone dare to deny angelic virtue! The thing is not true! It needs no freedom in order to create virtue. Freedom and virtue generally go together. But necessity and virtue are as much brother and sister as freedom and virtue. Jesus Christ was not capable of sin. It was as utterly impossible for Christ to have sinned, as for fire to drown or for water to burn. I suppose both of these things might be possible under some peculiar circumstances, but it never could have been possible for Christ to have committed or to have

endured the shadow of the commission of a sin! He did not know it. He knew no sin.

3. Now I have to introduce the third person. We will not go far for him. The third person is *the sinner*. And where is he? Will you turn your eyes within you, and look for him, each one of you? He is not very far from you. He has been a drunk—he has committed drunkenness and reveling and such like and we know that the man or woman who commits these things has no inheritance in the kingdom of God. There is another, he has taken God's name in vain. He has sometimes, in his hot passion, asked God to do most fearful things against his limbs and against his soul. Ah, there is the sinner. Where is he? I hear that man, with tearful eyes and with sobbing voice exclaim, "Sir, he is here!" I think I see some woman here, in the midst of us, some of us have accused her, perhaps, and she stands alone trembling and says not a word for herself. Oh, that the Master might say, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." I believe, I must believe, that somewhere among these many thousands, I hear some palpitating heart and that heart, as it beats so hurriedly, cries, "Sin, sin, sin, wrath, wrath, wrath—how can I get deliverance?" Ah, you are the man, a born rebel! Born into the world a sinner, you have added to your native guilt your own transgressions. You have broken the commandments of God, you have despised God's love, you have trampled on His grace, you have gone on until now the arrow of the Lord is drinking up your spirit! God has made you tremble. He has made you to confess your guilt and your transgression. Hear me, then—if your convictions are the work of God's Spirit—you are the person intended in the text! When it says, "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we"—that is *you*—"might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

I have introduced *the persons* and now I must introduce you to a *scene* of a great exchange which is made according to the text. The third person whom we introduce is *the prisoner at the bar*. As a sinner, God has called him before Him—he is about to be tried for life or death. God is gracious and He desires to save him. God is just and He must punish him. The sinner is to be tried. If there is a verdict of guilty brought in against him, how will the two conflicting attributes work in God's mind? He is loving, He wants to save him. He is just, He must destroy him! How shall this mystery be solved and the riddle be solved? Prisoner at the bar, can you plead, "Not guilty?" He stands speechless. Or, if he speaks, he cries, "I am guilty!"—

***"Should You smite my soul to hell,
Your righteous law approves it well."***

Then, you see, if he has pleaded guilty, there is no hope of there being any flaw in the evidence. And even if he had pleaded, "Not guilty," yet the evidence is most clear, for God, the Judge has seen his sin and recorded all his iniquities—so that there would be no hope of his escaping. The prisoner is sure to be found guilty! How can he escape? Is there a flaw in the indictment? No! It is drawn up by infinite Wisdom and dictated by eternal justice. And there is no hope there. Can he turn king's evidence? Ah, if we could be saved by turning king's evidence, we should all of us be saved! There is an anomaly in our law which often allows the greater criminal to escape, while the lesser criminal is punished. If the one is dastard and coward enough by betraying his comrade, he may save him-

self. If you turn to the *Newgate Calendar*—if any of you have patience enough to read so vile a piece of literature—you will see that the greater of two murderers has escaped because he turned king’s evidence while the other has been hanged. You have told on your fellows. You have said, “Lord, I thank You I am not as other men. I am not as that adulterer, or even as that publican. I bless You I am not like my neighbor who is an extortioner, a thief and so on.” You are telling against your neighbor. You are joint sinners and you are telling a tale against him! There is no hope for you. God’s law knows of no such injustice as a man escaping by turning informer upon others! How then shall the prisoner at the bar escape? Is there any possibility? Oh, how did heaven wonder! How did the stars stand still with astonishment! And how did the angels stay their songs a moment, when for the first time, God showed how He might be just and yet be gracious! Oh, I think I see heaven astonished and silence in the courts of God for the space of an hour when the Almighty said, “Sinner, I must and will punish you on account of sin! But I love you. The heart of My love yearns over you. How can I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My justice says, ‘Smite,’ but My love stays my hand and says, ‘Spare, spare the sinner!’ Oh, sinner, My heart has devised it—My Son, the pure and perfect, shall stand in your place and be accounted guilty and you, the guilty, shall stand in My Son’s place and be accounted righteous!” It would make us leap upon our feet in astonishment if we did but thoroughly understand this—the wonderful mystery of the transposition of Christ and the sinner! Let me put it so plainly that everyone can understand—Christ was spotless—sinners were vile. Says Christ, “My Father, treat Me as if I were a sinner; treat the sinner as if He were I; smite as sternly as You please, for I will bear it, and thus the heart of Your love may overflow with grace, and yet Your justice be unsullied, for the sinner is no sinner now.” He stands in Christ’s place, and with the Savior’s garments on; he is accepted!

Do you say that such an exchange as this is unjust? Will you say that God should not have made His Son a substitute for us and have let us go? Let me remind you it was purely voluntary on the part of Christ. Christ was willing to stand in our place. He had to drink the cup of our punishment, but He was quite willing to do it. And let me tell you yet one more unanswerable thing—the substitution of Christ was not an unlawful thing because the sovereign *God* made Him a substitute! We have read in history of a certain wife whose attachment to her husband was so great that the wife has gone into the prison and exchanged clothes with him. And while the prisoner was escaping, the wife has remained in the prison. And so the prisoner has escaped by a kind of surreptitious substitution. In such a case there was a clear breach of law and the prisoner escaping might have been pursued and again imprisoned. But in this case the substitution was made by the highest Authority. The text says, *God* “has made Him to be sin for us.” And therefore Christ did stand in my place and He did make the exchange lawfully. It was with the full determinate counsel of Almighty God, as well as with His own consent, that Christ stood in the sinner’s place, as the sinner does now in Christ’s place. Old Martin Luther was a man for speaking a thing pretty plainly and sometimes he spoke the truth of God so plainly that he made it look very much like a lie. In one of his sermons he said, “Christ was the

greatest sinner who ever lived.” Now Christ was never a sinner, but yet Martin was right. He meant to say all the sins of Christ’s people were taken off them, and put on Christ’s head, and so Christ stood in God’s sight as if He *had been the greatest sinner* who ever lived! He was never a sinner. He never knew sin—but good Martin, in his zeal to make men understand what it was, said, “Sinner, you became Christ; Christ, You became a sinner!” It is not quite the truth. The sinner is *treated* as if he was Christ, and Christ is treated as if He was the sinner. That is what is meant by the text, God “has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Let me just give you two illustrations of this. The first shall be taken from the Old Testament. When of old, men did come before God with sin; God provided a sacrifice which should be the representative of Christ, inasmuch as the sacrifice died instead of the sinner. The law ran, “He that sins shall die.” When men had committed sin, they brought a bullock or a sheep before the altar. They put their hand on the bullock’s head and acknowledged their guilt. And by that deed their guilt was *typically* removed from themselves to the bullock. Then, the poor bullock, which had done no wrong, was slaughtered and cast out as a sin offering. That is what every sinner must do with Christ, if he is to be saved. A sinner, by faith, comes and puts his hand on Christ’s head and confessing all his sin—his sin is no longer his—it is put on Christ. Christ hangs upon the tree. He bears the cross and endures the shame. And so the sin is all gone and cast into the depths of the sea. Take another illustration. We read in the New Testament, that “the Church (that is, the people of God) is Christ’s bride.” We all know that according to the law, the wife may have many debts. But no sooner is she married than her debts cease to be hers and become her husband’s at once. So if a woman is overwhelmed with debt so that she is in daily fear of the prison, let her but once stand up and give her hand to a man and become his wife and there is none in the world can touch her. The husband is liable for all, and she says to her creditor, “Sir, I owe you nothing; my husband did not owe you anything. I incurred the debt, but, inasmuch as I have become his wife, my debts are taken off from me, and become his.” It is even so with the sinner and Christ. Christ marries the sinner and puts forth His hand and takes the Church to be His. She is in immeasurable debt to God’s justice; she owes to God’s vengeance an intolerable weight of wrath and punishment. Christ says, “You are My wife—I have chosen you, and I will pay your debts.” And He has paid them, and got His full discharge! Now, whoever believes in Christ Jesus has peace with God because, “He has made Christ to be sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

And now, I shall have finished the explanation of the text, when I just bid *you remember the consequences of this great substitution*. Christ was made sin. We are made the righteousness of God. It was in the past, long further back than the memory of angels can reach—it was in the dark past, before cherubim or seraphim had flapped the unnavigated ether—when as yet worlds were not and creation had not a name—God foresaw the sin of man and planned his redemption. An everlasting covenant was formed between the Father and the Son, wherein the Son did stipulate to suffer for His elect. And the Father on His part did covenant to justify

them through the Son. Oh, wondrous covenant, you are the source of all the streams of atoning love! Eternity rolled on, time came and with it soon came the fall—and then when many years had passed—the fullness of time arrived, and Jesus prepared to fulfill His solemn engagement. He came into the world and was made man. From that moment, when He became man—mark the change that was worked in Him. Before, He had been entirely happy. He had never been miserable, never sad. But now as the effects of that terrible covenant which He had made with God, His Father, begins to pour wrath upon Him. What? You say does God actually account His Son to be a sinner? Yes, He does. His Son agreed to be the substitute, to stand in the sinner's place. God begins with Him at His birth. He puts Him in a manger. If He had considered Him as a perfect man, He would have provided Him a throne—but considering Him as a sinner, He subjects Him to woe and poverty from beginning to end! And now see Him grown to manhood. Look at Him—griefs pursue Him, sorrows follow Him. Stop! Griefs, why follow you the perfect? Why pursue you the immaculate? Justice, why do you not drive these griefs away?—“The pure should be peaceful and the immaculate should be happy.” The answer comes—“This man is pure in Himself but He has made Himself impure by taking His people's sin.” Guilt is imputed to Him and the very imputation of guilt brings grief with all its reality! At last I see death coming with more than his usual horrors. I see the grim skeleton with his dart well sharpened. I see behind him hell. I mark the grim prince of darkness and all the avengers rising up from their place of torment. I see them all besetting the Savior! I notice their terrible war upon Him in the garden. I note Him as He lies there wallowing in His blood in fearful soul-death. I see Him as in grief and sorrow, He walks to Pilate's bar. I see Him mocked and spit upon. I behold Him tormented, maltreated and blasphemed. I see Him nailed to the cross. I behold the mocking continued and the shame unabated. I mark Him shrieking for water and I hear Him complaining of the forsaking of God! I am astonished! Can this be just that a perfect being should suffer thus?—Oh, God, where are You that You can thus permit the oppression of the innocent? Have You ceased to be King of Justice, else why do You not shield the perfect One? The answer comes—“Be still. He is perfect in Himself, but He is the sinner now—He stands in the sinner's place. The sinner's guilt is on Him, and therefore, it is right, it is just, it is what He has Himself agreed to, that He should be punished as if He were a sinner; that He should be frowned upon; that He should die, and that He should descend to *Hades* unblest, uncomforted, not helped, not honored, and not acknowledged.” This was one of the effects of the great change which Christ made.

And now, take the other side of the question and I have done with the explanation. What was the effect on us? Do you see that sinner there dabbling his hand in lust; defiling his garments with every sin the flesh had ever indulged in? Do you hear him cursing God? Do you mark him breaking every ordinance that God has rendered sacred? But do you see him in a little while pursuing his way to heaven? He has renounced these sins! He has been converted and has forsaken them! He is going on the way to heaven. Justice, are you asleep? That man has broken your law. Is he to go to heaven? Listen how the fiends come rising from the pit and

cry—"That man deserves to be lost. He may not be now what he used to be, but his past sins must have vengeance." And yet there he goes safely on his way to heaven, and I see him looking back on all the fiends that accuse him. He cries out, "Behold, who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And when one would think all hell would be up in arms and accuse, the grim tyrant lies still and the fiends have nothing to say! And I see him turning his face heavenward to the throne of God and hear him cry, "Who is he that condemns?" As with unblushing countenance he challenges the Judge! Oh, justice, where are you? This man has been a sinner, a rebel—why not smite him to the dust for his impertinent presumption in thus challenging the justice of God? "No," says Justice, "he has been a sinner, but I do not look upon him in that light now. I have punished Christ instead of him—that sinner is no sinner now—he is perfect!" What? Perfect? "Perfect, because Christ was perfect, and I look upon him as if he were Christ. Though in himself he is all black as the gates of Kedar, I consider him to be fair as the curtains of Solomon! I made Christ the sinner, and I punished Christ. I made the sinner Christ, and I magnify and exalt him. And I will put a crown of pure gold upon his head, and by-and-by, I will give him a place among them who are sanctified, where he shall, harp in hand, forever praise the name of the Lord!" This is the grand result to sinners of the great exchange. "For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

II. Now, I have to come towards the close, to my second point, upon which I shall be brief but laborious. WHAT IS THE USE OF THIS DOCTRINE? Turn to the Scriptures and you will see. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for God, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you in Christ's place to be reconciled to God, for"—here is our grand argument—"He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin." Brothers and sisters, I am about to speak to you. I am about to beseech and exhort you—may the Spirit of God help me to do it with all the earnestness which becomes me. You and I shall face each other soon before the bar of the great judge, and I shall be responsible in the day of account for all I preach to you. Not for my style or talent, or lack of talent—I shall only be responsible for my earnestness and zeal in this matter. And now, before God I entreat you most earnestly to be reconciled to Him! You are by nature at enmity with God. You hate Him, you neglect Him, your enmity shows itself in various ways. I beseech you now to be reconciled to God. I might entreat you to be reconciled because it would be a fearful thing to die with God for your enemy. Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? Who can abide with the eternal burnings? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire. Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. I beseech you, therefore, be reconciled to God! I might on the other hand use another argument, and remind you that those who are reconciled to God are thereby proved to be the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. There are crowns for God's friends. There are harps for them who love Him. There is a mansion prepared for everyone who seeks Him. Therefore, if you would be blessed throughout eternity, be reconciled to God! But I shall not urge that. I shall urge the reason of my text. I beseech you, my hearer, be reconciled to God because if you repent, it is

proof that Christ has stood in your place! Oh, if this argument does not melt you, there is none in heaven or earth that can! If your heart melts not at such an argument as this, then it is harder than the nether millstone—surely you have a soul of stone and a heart of brass if you will not be reconciled to God who has written this for your encouragement!

I beseech you be reconciled to God because in this there is proof that God is loving you! You think God to be a God of wrath? Would He have given His own Son to be punished if He had hated you? Sinner, if God had anything but thoughts of love towards you, I ask, would He have given up His Son to hang upon the cross? Think not my God a tyrant! Think Him not a wrathful God, destitute of mercy. His Son, torn from His bosom and given up to die, is the best proof of His love! Oh, sinner, I need not blame you if you did hate your enemy, but I must blame you, call you mad, if you hate your friend! Oh, I need not wonder if you would not be reconciled to one who would not be reconciled to you. But inasmuch as you will not, by nature, be reconciled to the God who gave His own Son to die, I must marvel at the stupidity into which your evil nature has hurried you! God is love—will you not be reconciled to love? God is grace—will you not be reconciled to grace? Oh, you are a rebel of the deepest dye if you will still not be reconciled. Remember, too, oh sinner, that the way is open for your reconciliation. You need not be punished. No, you shall not be! If you know yourself to be a sinner, by the Spirit's teaching, God will not punish you to maintain His justice—that justice is sufficiently maintained by the punishment of Christ! He says, "Be reconciled." The child runs away from his father when he has sinned because he fears his father will punish him. But when his father burns the rod and, with a smiling face says, "Child, come here," surely it must be an unloving child who would not run into such a father's arms! Sinner, you deserve the sword—God has snapped the sword across the knee of Christ's atonement and now He says, "Come to Me." You deserve infinite, eternal wrath and the displeasure of God—God has quenched that wrath for all believers and now He says, "Come to Me and be reconciled." Do you tell me that you are not a sinner? I was not preaching to you! Do you tell me that you have never rebelled against God? I warn you that though *you* cannot find out your own sins, *God* will find them out! Do you say, "I need no reconciliation, except that which I can make myself?" Be warned that if you reject Christ, you reject your only hope, for all that you can do is less than nothing and vanity! I was not preaching to you, when I said, "Be reconciled." I was preaching to you, poor afflicted conscience. I was preaching to you—you that have been a great sinner and transgressor, you that feel your guilt; to you, you adulterer, trembling now under the lash of conviction; to you, you blasphemer, quivering now from head to foot. I preach to you, you thief, whose eyes are now filled with the tears of penitence; you feel that hell must be your portion unless you are saved through Christ. I preach to you, you that know your guilt! I preach to you and to every one such, and I beseech you to be reconciled to God, for God is reconciled to you! Oh, let not your heart stand out against this.

I cannot plead as I wish. Oh, if I could, I would plead with my heart, with my eyes and my lips that I might lead you to the Savior! You need not rail at me and call this an Arminian style of preaching. I care not for your opinion—this style is Scriptural. "As though God did beseech you by

us, we pray you, in Christ's place, be you reconciled to God." Poor broken-hearted sinner, God is as much preaching to you this morning and bidding you be reconciled as if He stood here, Himself, in His own person. And though I am a mean and puny man by whom He speaks, He speaks now as much as if it were by the voice of angels, "Be reconciled to God!" Come, hearer, turn not your eyes and head away from me. But give me your hand and lend me your heart while I weep over your hand and cry over your heart and beseech you not to despise your own mercy, not to be a suicide to your own soul, not to damn yourself! Now that God has awakened you to feel that you are an enemy, I beseech you now to be His friend! Remember, if you are now convicted of sin, there is no punishment for you. My Master, Jesus Christ, was punished in your place! Will you believe this? Will you trust in it and so be at peace with God? If you say, "No"; then I would have you know that you have put away your own mercy! If you say, "I need no reconciliation," you have thrust away the only hope you can ever have! Do it at your own hazard. I wash my hands of your blood. But, but, but, if you know yourself to need a Savior; if you would escape the hellish pit; if you would walk among them who are sanctified—I again, in the name of Him that will condemn you at the last day if you reject this invitation—implore and beseech you to be reconciled to God! I am His ambassador. When I have finished this sermon, I shall go back to court. Sinner, what shall I say of you? Shall I go back and tell my Master that you intend to be His enemy forever? Shall I go back and tell Him, "They heard me, but they regarded not"? They said in their hearts, "We will go away to our sins and our follies, and we will not serve your God, neither fear Him"? Shall I tell Him such a message as that? Must I be driven to go back to His palace with such a fearful story? I beseech you, send me not back so, lest my Master's wrath wax hot and He says—

***"They that despised My promised rest,
Shall have no portion there."***

But oh, may I not go back to court today and tell the Monarch on my knees, "There are some, my Lord, who have been great rebels, but when they saw themselves rebels, they threw themselves at the foot of the cross, and asked for pardon! They had strangely revolted, but I heard them say, 'If He will forgive me, I will turn from my evil ways, if He will enable me!' They were gross transgressors and they confessed it. But I heard them say, 'Jesus, Your blood and righteousness are my only trust.'" Happy ambassador! I will go back to my Master with a gladsome countenance, and tell Him that peace is made between many a soul and the great God! But miserable ambassador who has to go back and say, "There is no peace made." How shall it be? The Lord decide it! May many hearts give way to Omnipotent grace, and may enemies of grace be changed into friends that God's elect may be gathered in, and His eternal purpose accomplished!

III. And now, I close up by noticing the SWEET ENJOYMENT which this doctrine brings to a believer. Mourning Christian! Dry your tears! Are you weeping on account of sin? Why do you weep? Weep because of your sin, but weep not through any fear of punishment! Has the evil one told you that you shall be condemned? Tell him to his face that he lies! Ah, poor distressed believer, are you mourning over your own corrup-

tions? Look to your perfect Lord, and remember—you are complete in Him—you are in God's sight as perfect as if you had never sinned! No, more than that—the Lord our righteousness has put a divine garment upon you, so that you have more than the righteousness of man—you have the righteousness of *God!* Oh, you who are mourning by reason of in-bred sin and depravity—remember, none of your sins can condemn you! You have learned to hate sin; but you have learned to know that sin is not yours—it is put on Christ's head. Come, be of good cheer—your standing is not in yourself—it is in Christ! Your acceptance is not in yourself, but in your Lord! With all your sin, you are as much accepted today as in your sanctification! You are as much accepted of God today, with all your iniquities, as you will be when you stand before His throne, rendered free from all corruption. Oh, I beseech you, lay hold on this precious thought—perfection in Christ—for you are perfect in Christ Jesus! With your Savior's garment on, you are holy as the holy ones; you are now justified by faith; you have now peace with God. Be of good cheer. Do not fear to die! Death has nothing terrible in it for you. Christ has extracted all the gall from the sting of death. Tremble not at judgment—judgment will not bring you another acquittal to add to the acquittal already given in your cause—

***“Bold shall you stand at that great day,
For who anything to your charge can lay?
Fully absolved by Christ you are,
From sin's tremendous smart.”***

Ah, when you come to die, you shall challenge God, for you shall say, “My God, You can not condemn me, for You have condemned Christ for me; You have punished Christ in my place!” “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, rather, who is risen again, who also sits at the right hand of God, and makes intercession for us.” Christian, be glad! Let your head lack no oil, and your face no ointment. “Go your way; eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has accepted your works.” Do as Solomon bids us do—live happily all the days of your life, for you are accepted in the beloved—you are pardoned through the blood, and justified through the righteousness of Christ! What have you to fear? Let your face always wear a smile; let your eyes sparkle with gladness. Live near your Master; live in the suburbs of the celestial city as, by-and-by, when your time has come you shall borrow better wings than angels ever wore, and outsoar the cherubim, and rise up where your Jesus sits—sit at His right hand, even as He has overcome, and has sat down at His Father's right hand; and all this because the divine Lord, “was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

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A PREACHER FROM THE DEAD

NO. 143

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 26, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“And He said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets,
neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”
Luke 16:31.*

MAN is very loath to think ill of himself. The most of mankind are very prone to indulge in apologies for sin. They say, “If we had lived in better times we had been better men. If we had been born into this world under happier auspices we should have been holier. And if we had been placed in more excellent circumstances we should have been more inclined to be right.” The mass of men, when they seek the cause of their sin, seek it anywhere but in the right place. They will not blame their own nature for it. They will not find fault with their own corrupt heart but they will lay the blame anywhere else. Some of them find fault with their peculiar position. “If,” says one, “I had been born rich, instead of being poor, I would not have been dishonest.” “Or if,” says another, “I had been born in middle life, instead of being rich, I would not have been exposed to such temptations of lust and pride as I am now. But my very condition is so adverse to piety that I am compelled by the place I hold in society to be anything but what I ought to be.” Others turn round and find fault with the whole of society. They say that the whole organism of society is wrong. They tell us that everything in government, everything that concerns the state, everything which melts men into commonwealths is all so bad that they cannot be good while things are what they are. They must have a revolution, they must upset everything—then they think they could be holy! Many, on the other hand, throw the blame on their training. If they had not been so brought up by their parents; if they had not been so exposed in their youth they would not have been what they are. It is their parent’s fault! The sin lay at their father’s or their mother’s door. Or it is their constitution. Hear them speak for themselves, “If I had such a temper as so-and-so, what a good man I would be! But with my headstrong disposition it is impossible. It is all very well for you to talk to me, but men have different turns of mind and my turn of mind is such that I could not by any means be a serious character.” And so he throws the blame on his constitution. Others go a deal farther and throw the blame on the ministry. “If,” they say, “at one time the minister had been

more earnest in preaching, I would have been a better man. If it had been my privilege to sit under sounder doctrine and hear the Word more faithfully preached, I would have been better.” Or else they lay it at the door of professors of religion and say, “If the church were more consistent, if there were no hypocrites and no formalists—then we would reform!” Ah, sirs, you are putting the saddle on the wrong horse—you are laying the burden on the wrong back! The blame is in your *hearts*, nowhere else! If your hearts were renewed you would be better. But until that is done, if society were remodeled to perfection, if ministers were angels and professors of religion were seraphs, you would be none the better! And having less excuse for your sin, you would be doubly guilty and perish with a more terrible destruction.

But yet men will always be saying that if things were different *they* would be different too; but the difference must be made in themselves before they can begin in the right place! Among other whims which have occurred to the human mind, such a one as that of my text may sometimes have arisen. “If,” said the rich man in hell, “if one would arise from the dead, if Lazarus should go from heaven to preach—my hardened brothers and sisters would repent.” And some have been apt to say, “If my aged father, or some venerable patriarch could rise from the dead and preach, we would, all of us, turn to God.” That is another way of casting the blame in the wrong quarter! We shall endeavor, if we can, to refute such a supposition as that this morning and affirm most strenuously the doctrine of the text, that, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” Let us proceed with this subject.

Suppose a preacher should come from another world to preach to us—we must naturally suppose that he came from heaven. Even the rich man did not ask that he or any of his companions in torment might go out of hell to preach! Spirits that are lost and given up to unutterable wickedness could not visit this earth. And if they did, they could not preach the truth, nor lead us on the road to heaven which they had not trod themselves. The advent of a damned spirit upon earth would be a curse, a blight, a withering blast—we need not suppose that such a thing ever did or could occur. The preacher from another world, if such could come, must come from heaven. He must be a Lazarus who had lain in Abraham’s bosom, a pure, perfect and holy being. Now, imagine for a moment that such a one had descended upon earth. Suppose tomorrow that we heard a sudden piece of news—that a venerable spirit who had been a long time buried, had all of a sudden burst his grave clothes, lifted up his coffin lid and was now preaching the word of life? Oh, what a rush there would be to hear him preach! What place in this wide world would be large enough to hold his massive congregations? How would

you rush to listen to him! How many thousands of portraits would be published of him, representing him in the dread winding sheet of death, or as an angel fresh from heaven? Oh, how this city would be stirred—and not only this city, but this whole land! Nations far remote would soon hear the news. And every ship would be freighted with passengers bringing men and women to hear this wondrous preacher and traveler who had returned from the unknown brook. And how you would listen! And how solemnly would you gaze at that unearthly specter! And how would your ears be attentive to his every word! His faintest syllable would be caught and published everywhere throughout the world—the utterances of a man who had been dead and was alive again! And we are very apt to suppose that if such a thing should happen, there would be numberless conversions—for surely the congregations thus attracted would be immensely blessed! Many hardened sinners would be led to repent. Hundreds of halts would be made to decide and great good would be done! Ah, stop! Though the first part of the fairy dream should occur, the last would not! If someone should rise from the dead, sinners would no more repent through his preaching than through the preaching of any other! God might bless such preaching to salvation, if He pleased. But in itself there would be no more power in the preaching of the sheeted dead, or of the glorified spirit, than there is in the preaching of feeble man today! “Though one should rise from the dead, they would not repent.”

But yet, many men would suppose that advantages would arise from the resurrection of a saint who could testify to what he had seen and heard. Now, the advantages, I suppose, could only be three. Some would say there would be advantage in the *strength of evidence which such a man could give to the truth of Scripture*; for you would say, “If a man did actually come from the pearly-gated city of Jerusalem—the home of the blessed—then there would be no more dispute about the truth of revelation. That would be settled!” Some would suppose that he could tell us more than Moses and the prophets had told us and that there would be an *advantage in the instruction which he could confer*, as well as in the evidence which he would bear. And, thirdly, there may be some who suppose that it would be an advantage gained *in the manner in which such a one would speak*; “For surely,” they say, “he would speak with great eloquence, with a far mightier power and with a deeper feeling than any common preacher who had never beheld the solemnities of another world.” Now let us take these three points, one after another, and we think we will settle them.

I. First, it is thought that if one came from the dead to preach, there would be A CONFIRMATION OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, and a testimony borne at which jeering infidelity would stand aghast in silence. Stop! We will see about that. We do not think so. We believe that the res-

urrection of one dead man, today, to come into this hall and preach would be no confirmation of the gospel to any person here present who does not believe it already.

If, my friends, the testimony of one man who had been raised from the dead were of any value for the confirming of the gospel, *would not God have used it before now?* This shall be my first argument. It is undoubtedly true that some have risen from the dead. We find accounts in Holy Scripture of some men who, by the power of Christ Jesus, or through the instrumentality of prophets, were raised from the dead. But you will note this memorable fact—that they never, any of them, spoke one word which is recorded—by way of telling us what they saw while they were dead! I shall not enter into any discussion as to whether their souls slept during the time of their death, or whether they were in heaven or not. That would be a discussion without profit, only rendering disputes which could yield no fruit. I only say it is memorable that there is not a record of anyone of them having given any description of what they saw while they were dead. Oh, what secrets might he have told, who had laid in his grave four days! Do you not suppose that his sisters questioned him? Do you not think that they asked him what he saw—whether he had stood before the burning throne of God and been judged for the things done in his body and whether he had entered into rest? But, however they may have asked, it is certain he gave no answer, for had he given an answer we would have known it by now. Tradition would have cherished the record. And do you remember, when Paul once preached a long sermon, even until midnight? There was a young man in the third loft named Eutychus who fell asleep and fell down and was taken up dead. Paul came down and prayed and Eutychus was restored to life. But did Eutychus get up and preach after he had come from the dead? No. The thought never seems to have struck a single person in the assembly! Paul went on with his sermon, and they sat and listened to him, and did not care one fig about what Eutychus had seen, for Eutychus had nothing more to tell them than Paul had. Of all the number of those who by divine might have been brought again from the shades of death, I repeat the assertion—we have not one secret told. We have not one mystery unraveled by all of them! Now, God knows best. We will not compare our surmises to divine decision. If God decided that resurrected men should be silent, it was best it should be. Their testimony would have been of little worth or help to us, or else it would have been borne.

But again, I think it will strike our minds at once that if this very day a man should rise from his tomb and come here to affirm the truth of the gospel, *the infidel world would be no more near believing than it is now.* Here comes Mr. Infidel Critic. He denies the evidences of the Bible—evidences which so clearly prove its authenticity—that we are obliged to

believe him to be either blasphemous or senseless—and we leave him his choice between the two. But he dares to deny the truth of Holy Scripture and will have it that all the miracles whereby it is attested are untrue and false. Do you think that one who had risen from the dead would persuade such a man as that to believe? What? When God's whole creation having been ransacked by the hand of science has only testified to the truth of revelation—when the whole history of buried cities and departed nations has but preached out the truth that the Bible is true—when every strip of land in the East has been an exposition and a confirmation of the prophecies of Scripture? If men are yet unconvinced, do you suppose that one dead man rising from the tomb would convince them? No. I see the critical blasphemer already armed for his prey. Listen to him—"I am not quite sure that you ever were dead, sir. You profess to be risen from the dead. I do not believe you! You say you have been dead and have gone to heaven. My dear man, you were in a trance! You must bring proof from the parish register that you were dead." The proof is brought that he was dead. "Well, now you must prove that you were buried." It is proved that he was buried and it is proved that some sexton in old times did take up his dry bones and cast his dust in the air. "That is very good. Now I want you to prove that you are the identical man that was buried." "Well I am, I know I am. I tell you as an honest man I have been to heaven and I have come back again." "Well then," says the infidel, "it is not consistent with reason. It is ridiculous to suppose that a man who was dead and buried could ever come to life again and so I don't believe you! I tell you so straight to your face!"

That is how men would answer him. And instead of having only the sin of denying many miracles, men would have to add to it the guilt of denying another. But they would not be as much as a tenth of an inch nearer to conviction. And certainly, if the wonder were done in some far-off land and only reported to the rest of the world, I can suppose that the whole infidel world would exclaim, "Simple childish tales and such traditions have been current elsewhere. But we are sensible men, we do not believe them!" Although a churchyard should start into life and stand up before the infidel who denies the truth of Christianity, I declare I do not believe there would be enough evidence in all the churchyards in the world to convince him! Infidelity would still cry for something more. It is like the horseleech. It cries, "Give, give!" Prove a point to an infidel and he wants it proved again! Let it be as clear as noonday to him from the testimony of many witnesses, yet he does not believe it. In fact, he does believe it—but he pretends not to do so and is an infidel in spite of himself. But certainly the dead man's rising would be little worth for the conviction of such men.

But remember, my dear friends, that the most numerous class of unbelievers are a set of people who never think at all! There are a great number of people in this land who eat and drink and everything else except *think*. At least they think enough to take their shop shutters down in the morning and put them up at night. They think enough to know a little about the rising of the funds, or the rate of interest, or something like how articles are selling or the price of bread. But their brains seem to be given them for nothing at all except to meditate upon bread and cheese! To them religion is a matter of very small concern. They dare say the Bible is very true. They dare say religion is all right. But it does not often trouble them much. They suppose they are Christians—for were they not christened when they were babies? They must be Christians—at least they suppose so—but they never sit down to inquire what religion is. They sometimes go to church and chapel and elsewhere. But it does not signify much to them. One minister may contradict another but they do not know. They dare say they are both right! One minister may fall foul of another in almost every doctrine. It does not matter and they pass over religion with the strange idea—“God Almighty will not ask us where we went, I dare say.” They do not exercise their judgments at all! Thinking is such hard work for them that they never trouble themselves at all about it. Now, if a man were to rise from the dead tomorrow, these people would never be startled. Yes, yes, they would go and see him once, just as they go and see any other curiosity, the living skeleton, or Tom Thumb! They would talk about him a good deal and say, “There’s a man risen from the dead,” and possibly some winter’s evening they might read one of his sermons. But they would never give themselves trouble to think whether his testimony was worth anything or not. No, they are such blocks they never could be stirred! And if the ghost were to come to any of their houses, the most they might feel would be they were in a fearful fright. But as to what he said—that would never exercise their lead brains and never stir their stony senses! Though one should rise from the dead, the great mass of these people never would be affected.

And, besides, my friends, *if men will not believe the witness of God, it is impossible that they should believe the witness of man*. God spoke from the top of Sinai and by Moses in the book of the Law. He spoke by the many prophets in the Old Testament and especially His own word by His own Son, who has brought immortality to light by the gospel. If *these* cannot convince men, then there is nothing in the world that can of itself accomplish the work! No, if God speaks once but man regards him not, we need not wonder that we have to preach many a time without being regarded. And we should not harbor the thought that some *men* who had risen from the dead would have a greater power to convince than the *words of God*. If this Bible is not enough to convert you—apart from the

Spirit (and certainly it is not)—then there is nothing in the world that can, apart from His influence! And if the revelation which God has given of His Son, Jesus Christ, in this blessed book—if the Holy Scripture is not in the hands of God enough to bring you to the faith of Christ—though an angel from heaven or the saints from glory—though God, Himself, should descend on earth to preach to you—you would go on unsaved and unblessed. “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” That is the first point.

II. It is imagined, however, that if one of “the spirits of the just made perfect” would come to earth—even if he did not produce a most satisfactory testimony to the minds of skeptics—he would yet be able to give abundant information concerning the kingdom of heaven. “Surely,” some would say, “if Lazarus had come from the bosom of Abraham, he could have unfolded a tale that would have made our hair stand upright while he talked of the torments of the rich man! Surely, if he had looked from the gates of bliss, he might have told us about the worm that dies not and the fire that never can be quenched—some horrible details, some thrilling words of horror and of terror he might have uttered—which would have unfolded to us more of the future state of the lost than we now know.” “And,” says the bright-eyed believer, “if he had come to earth he might have told us of the saints’ everlasting rest—he might have pictured to us that glorious city which has the Lord God for its eternal light—where the streets are of gold and its gates of pearl. Oh, how sweetly would he have sung upon the bosom of Christ and the felicity of the blessed! He had been—

***‘Up where eternal ages roll!
Where solid pleasures never die
And fruits immortal feast the soul.’***

Surely he would have brought down with him some handfuls of the clusters of Eshcol! He would have been able to tell us some celestial secrets which would have cheered our hearts and nerved us to run the heavenly race and put on a cheerful courage.” Stop! That, too, is a dream. A spirit of the just descending from heaven could tell us no more that would be of any use to us than we already know! What more could that spirit from heaven tell us of the pains of hell than we already know? Is not the Bible explicit enough? Did not the lips of Christ dreadfully portray the lake of fire? Did He not, even He who wept over men, did He not in awful language tell us that God would say at last, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”? Do you need more thrilling words than these—“The worm that dies not and the fire that is not quenched”? Do you need more terrible warnings than these—“The wicked shall be cast into hell, with all the nations that forget God”? Do you need more awful warnings than this—“Who among us shall dwell

with everlasting burnings.” What? Do you need a fuller declaration than the words of God—“Tophet is prepared of old. The pile thereof is fire and much wood. The breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone does kindle it”? You cannot need more than Scripture gives of that; even that which you try to run away from and escape! You say the Bible is too horrible and tells you too much of damnation and hell. Sirs, if you think there is too much there, and therefore, reject it, would you stand for an instant to listen to one who should tell you more? No! You do not wish to know more, nor would it be of any use to you if you did! Do you need more details concerning the judgment—that day of wrath to which each of us is drawing near? Are we not told that the king “shall sit on the throne of His glory and before Him shall be gathered all people. And He shall divide them, the one from the other, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats”? Suppose there were one here who had seen the solemn preparation for the great judgment—one who had stood where the throne is to be planted and had marked the future with a more piercing eye than ours? Yet of what good would it be to us? Could he tell us more than Holy Writ has told us now—at least, anything which would be more profitable? Perhaps he knows no more than we. And one thing I am sure of—he could not tell us more about the rule of judgment than we now know.

Spirit that has returned from another world, tell me, how are men judged? Why are they condemned? Why are they saved? I hear him say, “Men are condemned because of sin. Read the ten commandments of Moses, and you will find the ten great condemnations whereby men are forever cut off.” I knew that before, bright Spirit; you have told me nothing! “No,” he says, “and nothing can I tell.” “Because I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was sick, and you visited Me not; I was in prison, and you came not unto Me; therefore, inasmuch as you did it not unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it not to Me. Depart, you cursed!” “Why, Spirit, was that the word of the King?” “It was,” he says. “I have read that too—you have told me nothing new.” If you do not know the difference between right and wrong from reading the Scripture—you would not know it if a spirit should tell you! If you do not know the road to hell, and the road to heaven from the Bible, itself—you would never know it at all! No book could be more clear, no revelation more distinct, no testimony more plain, and since without the agency of the Spirit, these testimonies are insufficient for salvation, it follows that no further declaration would be of any use! Salvation is ascribed wholly to God, and man’s ruin only to man. What more could a spirit tell us than a distinct declaration of the two great truths of God—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help found!”

Beloved, we do solemnly say again that Holy Scripture is so perfect and so complete, that it cannot need the supplement of any declaration concerning a future state. All that you ought to know concerning the future, you may know from Holy Scripture. It is not right to say with Young—

***“My hopes and fears start up alarmed
And over life’s narrow verge look down—
On what? A bottomless abyss,
A dread eternity.”***

It is not right to say that—as if it were all we know. Blessed be God, the saint does not look *down* upon a bottomless abyss! He looks *up* to the celestial “city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God!” Nor do even the wicked look down upon an unknown abyss; for to them it is clearly revealed! Though “eye has not seen, nor ear heard” the tortures of the lost, yet has Holy Scripture sufficiently told us of them to make it a well-mapped road—so that when they meet with death and hell and terror, it shall be no new thing—for they heard of it before and it was distinctly revealed to them. Nothing more could we know that would be of any use. Remember, brothers and sisters, if to know more of the future state would be a blessing for us, God would not withhold it! There can be no more told us. If what you know would not persuade you, “Neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

III. Yet some say, “SURELY IF THERE WERE NO GAIN IN *MATTER*, THERE WOULD BE A GAIN IN *MANNER*. Oh, if such a spirit had descended from the spheres, how he would preach! What celestial eloquence would flow from his lips! How majestically would he word his speech! How mightily would he move his hearers! What marvelous words would he utter! What sentences that might start us from our feet and make us quiver with their thrilling influence! There would be no dullness in such a preacher! It would be no fatigue to hear *him*. There would be no lack of affection in him and surely no lack of earnestness! We might well be pleased to hear him every day and never weary with his wondrous speech! Such a preacher earth has never heard. Oh, if he would but come! How would we listen!”—Stop! That, too, is but a dream! I do believe that Lazarus from Abraham’s bosom would not be as good a preacher as a man who has not died but whose lips have been touched with a live coal from off the altar! Instead of his being better, I cannot see that he would be quite as good. Could a spirit from the other world speak to you more solemnly than Moses and the prophets have spoken? Or could they speak more solemnly than you have heard the word already spoken to you at different times? O sirs, some of you have heard sermons that have been as solemn as death and as serious as the grave! I can recall to some of your memories seasons when you have sat beneath the sound of the word wondering and trembling all the while! It seemed as if the minister

had taken to himself, by God's grace, bow and arrows and was making your conscience the target at which his shafts were leveled! You have not known where you were—you have been so grievously frightened and smitten with terror that your knees knocked together and your eyes ran with tears. What more do you need than that? If that solemn preaching of some mighty preacher whom God had inspired for the time—if that did not save you—what *can* save you—apart from the influence of the Holy Spirit? And oh, you have heard more solemn preaching than that. You had a little daughter once. That child of yours had been to the Sunday school. It came home and was sick unto death. You watched it by night and day and the fever grew upon it. And you saw that it must die. You have not yet forgotten how your little daughter, Mary, preached you a sermon that was solemn, indeed—just before she departed, she took your hand in her little hand and she said, "Father, I am going to heaven. Will you follow me?" That was a solemn sermon to you! What more could a sheeted dead have said?

You have not forgotten how, when your father lay dying—(a holy man of God he had been in his day, and served his Master well)—you with your brothers and sisters stood around the bed, and he addressed you one by one. Woman! You have not yet forgotten, despite all your sins and wickedness since then, how he looked you in the face and said, "My daughter, it were better for you that you had never been born than that you should be a despiser of Christ, and a neglecter of His salvation." And you have not forgotten how he looked when with solemn tears in his eyes, he addressed you and said, "My children, I charge you by death, and by eternity; I charge you, if you love your own souls, despise not the gospel of Christ! Forsake your follies and turn unto God and live." What preacher do you need better than that? What voice more solemn than the voice of your own parent upon the confines of eternity? And you have not yet escaped from the influence of another solemn scene. You had a friend, a so-called friend. He was a traitor—one who lived in sin and rebelled against God with a high hand and an outstretched arm. You remember him on his deathbed—when he lay near to death and terrors got hold of him! The flames of hell began to get their grip of him *before* he had departed. You have not yet forgotten his shrieks, his screams—you have not quite got from your vision in your dreams that hand through which the fingernails were almost pierced in agony—and that face, contorted with direful twitching of dismay! You have not yet escaped from that horrid yell with which the spirit entered the realm of darkness and forsook the land of the living! What more of a preacher do you need? Have you heard this preaching and yet have you not repented? Then verily, if after all this you are still hardened—neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead!

Ah, but you say, you need someone to preach to you with more *feeling*. Then, sir, you cannot have him in the preacher you desire! A spirit from heaven could not be a feeling preacher. It would be impossible for Lazarus, who had been in Abraham's bosom, to preach to you with emotion. As a perfect being, he must, of course, be supremely happy. Imagine this morning a supremely happy being preaching to you about repentance and the wrath of God. Do you see him? There is a placid smile ever upon his brow! The light of heaven gilds his face—he is talking about the torments of hell—it was the place for sighs and groans. But he cannot sigh; his face is just as placid as ever. He is speaking of the torments of the wicked—it is the time for tears—he cannot weep—that were incompatible with blessedness! The man is preaching of dreadful things with a smile upon his face! There is summer on his brow and winter on his lips—heaven in his eyes and hell in his mouth! You could not bear such a preacher—he would seem to mock you! Yes, it needs a *man* to preach to a man like yourselves; one who is capable of feeling; we need one who when he preaches of Christ, smiles on his hearers with love—who, when he tells of terror, quails in his own spirit while he utters the wrath of God. The great power of preaching, next to the power of God's Spirit, lies in the *preacher's feeling* it! We shall never do much good in preaching unless we feel what we utter. "*Knowing* the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." Now a glorified spirit from heaven could not feel these things. He could show but little emotion. True, he could speak of the glories of heaven. And how would his face grow brighter and brighter and brighter—as he told the wonders of that upper world! But when he came to cry, "Flee from the wrath to come," the voice would sound as sweet when he spoke of death and judgment, as when he spoke of glory. And that would make sad discord, the sound not answering to the sense—the modulations of his voice being unfit to express the idea upon the mind. Such a preacher could not be a powerful preacher even though he came again from the dead!

And one thing we may say—he could not preach more closely home to you than you have had the truth preached. I shall not say that you have had preaching put very close to you from the pulpit. But I have sometimes strived to be very personal—I have not shunned to point some of you out in the congregation, and give you a word of rebuke—such as you could not mistake. If I knew that any of you were indulging in sin, I have not spared you. I bless God that I am not afraid to be a personal preacher and to shoot the arrow at each separate man when he needs it! But, nevertheless, I cannot preach home to you as I wish. You are all thinking your *neighbor* is intended—when it is yourself! But you once have had a personal preacher. There was a great preacher called at your house one day—his name was Cholera. A terrible preacher was he! With grim words

and hard accent he came and laid his hand upon your wife. And then he put his other hand on you and you grew cold and well-near stiff! You remember how he preached to you then? He made your conscience ring again and again! He would not let you lie still. He cried aloud concerning your sin and your iniquity. He brought all your past life to light and set all your evil conduct in review from your childhood even up till then! He led you through all your wanderings—and then he took the whip of the Law and began to plow your back with furrows. He frightened you with “the wrath to come.” You sent for the minister. You bade him pray. You thought you prayed yourself. And after all that—he had come on a fruitless errand—no good had been done to you! You had been a little startled and a little stirred, but you are today what you were then—unsaved and unconverted. Then, sir, you would not be converted though one rose from the dead! You have been wrecked at sea. You have been cast into the jaws of the grave by fever. You have been nearly smitten to death by accident. And yet, with all this personal preaching and with Mr. Conscience thundering in your ears, you are today unconverted! Then learn this truth of God—no outward means in the world can ever bring you to the footstool of divine grace and make you a Christian if Moses and the prophets have failed! All that can be done now is this—God the Spirit must bless the word to you—otherwise conscience cannot awaken you, reason cannot awaken you, powerful appeals cannot awaken you, persuasion cannot bring you to Christ! Nothing will ever do it except God the Holy Spirit! Oh, do you feel that you are drawn this morning? Does some sweet hand draw you to Christ and does some blessed voice say, “Come to Jesus, sinner”? There is hope for you! That IS God’s Spirit! Bless Him for it! He is drawing you by the bands of love and the cords of a man. But oh, if you are not drawn and left to yourself, you will surely die! Brothers and sisters in the faith, let us lift up our prayers to God for sinners that they may be drawn to Christ; that they may be led to come, all guilty and burdened and look to Jesus to be lightened. And that they may be persuaded, by the quickening power of the Spirit, to take Christ to be their “all-in-all”—knowing that they themselves are “nothing at all.” O God the Holy Spirit bless these words, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen and Amen.

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WAITING ONLY UPON GOD

NO. 144

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 2, 1857,
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“My soul, wait you only upon God.”
Psalm 62:5.

CALVIN translates this verse, “My soul, be you silent before God.” Rest calm and undisturbed. Your enemies are round about you and have sorely beset you. Your troubles surround you like strong bulls of Bashan. But rest, my soul, in God. Your enemies are mighty, but HE is Almighty. Your troubles are grievous, but He is greater than your troubles and He shall deliver you from them. Let not your soul be agitated; the *wicked* are like the troubled sea that cannot rest—be not like they are. Be calm—let not a wave ruffle your untroubled spirit. “Cast your burden on the Lord,” and then sleep on His bosom. Commit your way unto Jehovah and then rest in sure and certain confidence, for—

*“He everywhere has sway,
 And all things serve His might.
 His every act is pure blessing,
 His path unsullied light.”*

Oh, that we had divine grace to carry out the text in that sense of it! It is a hard matter to be calm in the day of trouble. But it is a high exercise of divine grace when we can stand unmoved in the day of adversity, and feel that—

*“Should the earth’s old pillars shake
 And all the wheels of nature break.
 Our steadfast souls would fear no more
 Than solid rocks when billows roar.”*

That is to be a Christian, indeed! Nothing is so sweet as to—

*“Lie passive in God’s hand,
 And know no will but His.”*

I shall, however, this morning keep to the Authorized Version. “My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” Here is, first, an *exhortation*, and secondly, an *expectation*.

I. We begin with the EXHORTATION. The Psalmist was a *preacher*, and it was quite right that he should sometimes make himself his congregation. The preacher who neglects to preach to himself has forgotten a very important part of his audience. He who never in his privacy speaks a word to his own soul does not know where to begin his preaching. We

must first address our own soul! If we can move *that* by the words we may utter, we may hope to have some power with the souls of others.

And note where David begins his exhortation—“*My soul, wait you upon God.*” He addresses the very center of his being. “My soul, I preach to you, for if you go wrong, all is amiss. If you are amiss, my eyes follow after vanity, my lips utter foolishness, my feet become swift to shed blood and my hands meddle with mischief. My soul, I will preach to you. My face, I will not preach to you. Some men preach to their faces and try to put on their countenances emotions which they never feel. No, countenance, I will leave you alone—you will be right enough if the soul is so. I will preach to you, O my soul and address my sermon to you. You are my only auditor—hear what I say.” “*My soul, wait you only upon God.*” Let us, then, explain the exhortation.

1. First, the Psalmist means by this—*my soul, make God your only objective in life.* “My soul, wait you only upon God.” Make Him the summit of your desires and the objective of your exertions. Oh, how many men have made a fearful shipwreck of their entire existence by choosing an objective inferior to this high and noble objective of existence—the serving of God. I could put my finger upon a thousand biographies of men who after having lived in this world and done great things, have, nevertheless, died unhappily because they did not first seek God and His righteousness! Perhaps there never was a mind more gigantic than the mind of Sir Walter Scott—a man whose soul was as fertile as the newly broken soil of the land of gold! I believe he was a good man, a Christian. But he made a mistake in the objective of his life. His objective was to be a lord, to found a family, to plant the root of an ancestral tree—the fruit of which would be heard of in ages to come. Magnificent in his hospitality, generous in his nature, laborious in his continual strife to win the objective of his life, yet after all he died a disappointed and unsuccessful man! He reared his palace, he accumulated his wealth and one sad day saw it scattered to the wind—and he had lost that for which he had lived! Had he fixed his eye upon some better objective than the pleasing of the public, or the accumulation of wealth, or the founding of a family, he might have got the others and he would not have lost the first! Oh, had he said, “Now I will serve my God. This potent pen of mine, dedicated to the Most High, shall weave into my marvelous stories things that shall enlighten, convict and lead to Jesus,” he might have died penniless but he would have died having achieved the objective of his wishes and not a disappointed man! Oh if we could make God our only objective, we would rest quite secure and whatever happened, it never could be said of us, “He died without having had what he wished for.” How many of you who are here today are making the same mistake on a smaller scale? You are living for business. You will be disappointed! You are living for fame. As certain as you are alive, you will die disappointed, grieved and sad at

heart! You are living to maintain respectability—perhaps that is the utmost of your desire—poor aim that is! You shall be disappointed! Or even if you gain it, it shall be a bubble not worth the chase. Make God your one objective in life and all these things shall be added to you! “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” There is no loss in being a Christian and making God the first objective. But make anything else your goal and with all your running, should you run ever so well, you shall fall short of the mark! Or if you gain it, you shall fall uncrowned, unhonored to the earth! “My soul, wait you only upon God.” Say, “I love to serve Him. I love to spread His kingdom, to advance His interests, to tell the story of His gospel, to increase the number of His converted ones—that shall be my only objective. And when that is sufficiently attained, ‘Lord, let Your servant depart in peace.’”

2. But the Psalmist meant other things beside this, when he said, “My soul, wait you only upon God.” He meant, *My soul, have no care but to please God*. Perhaps the most miserable people in the world are the very careful ones. You who are so anxious about what shall happen tomorrow that you cannot enjoy the pleasures of today; you who have such a peculiar cast of mind that you suspect every star to be a comet and imagine that there must be a volcano in every grassy meadow; you who are more attracted by the spots in the sun than by the sun, itself, and more amazed by one dried leaf upon the tree than by all the foliage of the woods; you who make more of your troubles than you could do of your joys—I say—I think you belong to the most miserable of men! David says to his soul, “My soul, be you careful for nothing except God. Cast all your cares on Him. He cares for you, so make to love and serve Him your great concern. And then you need care for nothing else at all.” Oh, there are many of you people who go picking your way through this world—you are afraid to put one foot down before another—because you fear you will be in danger! If you had enough grace to just turn your eyes to God, you might walk straight on in confidence and say, “Though I should tread on Hell, itself, at the next step, yet if God bade me tread there, it would be heaven to me.” There is nothing like the faith that can leave care with God and have no thought but how to please Him. “Behold the fowls of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them.” “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, and neither do they spin—and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Say not, “What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek); for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.” Oh, happy is the man who says, “I am a gentleman commoner upon the bounties of providence. Let God send me little, it will be enough! Let Him send me much, it will not be too much, for I will divide my wealth with those who have

less! I will trust to Him. He has said, 'Your bread shall be given you and your water shall be sure.' Then let famine come, I shall not starve! Let the brook dry up, He will open the bottles of heaven and give me drink! Whatever shall happen to this world, yet shall I be secure against all ills." Some people talk about being independent gentlemen. I know an independent gentleman that lives on three shillings and sixpence a week. He has nothing but parish allowance and the charity of friends. But he says in sickness and in weariness, "Jehovah will provide. If my Father knows I need more, He will send me more." And if you hint to him that his parish allowance will be taken away, he will just smile and say, "If it does not come one way, it will come another, for God is the chancellor of my treasury and He will never let my funds run too low. I shall have it, for God has said it—"They who wait on the Lord shall not want any good thing." That is the right kind of independence—the independence of the man who knows no dependence except upon God! My soul, let this be your care—to serve God and wait only upon Him.

3. Again, David meant this—*my soul, make God your only dependence, and never trust in anything else.* It is marvelous how God's creation illustrates my text—David bids his soul take God for its only pillar. Have you ever noticed how the world displays the power of God in its lack of any apparent support? Behold the unpillared arch of heaven—see how it stretches its gigantic span! And yet it falls not, though it is unpropped and unbuttressed. "He hangs the world upon nothing." What chain is it that binds up the stars and keeps them from falling? Lo, they float in ether, upheld by His omnipotent arm, who has laid the foundations of the universe! A Christian should be a second exhibition of God's universe—his faith should be an unpillared confidence—resting on the past and on the eternity to come as the sure groundwork of its arch. His faith should be like the world—it should hang on nothing but the promises of God and have no other support but that. And he himself, like the stars, should float in the ether of confidence—needing nothing to uphold him but the right hand of the Majesty on high! But, fools that we are, we will always be getting other confidences. The merchant has a man who so understands his business that he thinks the whole establishment depends upon that one man. And if he should die or give up his situation, what would become of the business? Ah, merchant, if you are a godly man, you have forgotten where your confidence ought to be—not in your *man*, but in your *God!* The wife often says, "I love the Lord, but if my husband died, where would be my dependence?" What? Have you buttressed the Almighty even with a husband's love? Trust in Him and make Him your only consolation! He will supply your needs out of the riches of His fullness. Oh, we would not have half the trouble we have if we learned to live wholly upon God! But we are so dependent upon *creatures*. We get to leaning one on another. And our dear friend, into whose

ear we have told our tale of misery seems to be quite necessary to our existence. Take heed, then—take heed—you are trying to prop that which requires no prop when you lean upon your friend! You are dishonoring Christ when you make him your joy and confidence. And when in some grievous day, your friend shall be smitten from the earth—then you will begin to feel it would have been better for you if you had leaned upon your heavenly Friend and made no one your strength and your support but God.

This should be a good lesson for some who occupy the pulpit. There is so much time-serving everywhere. The Dissenting minister must make his prop out of his deacons, and the clergyman will too much make his prop out of some high officials in church or state who are likely to promote him. We shall never get an outspoken gospel until we get a set of men who say, “I don’t care for the whole earth! If there is no one else right and I conceive myself to be so, I will battle the whole earth—I ask no man’s wish, or will, or assent! ‘Let God be true and every man a liar.’” Oh, we need a few of those gigantic spirits who need no approvers—who can of themselves sweep their acre of men and slay them with their strong broad sword of confidence! And when we get these care-for-nothings, who care only for God, then shall the earth shake again beneath the tramp of angels, and God shall visit our land, even as He did of old!

4. Again, beloved, “My soul, wait you only upon God,” that is to say, *make God your only guide and confidence*. When we get into trouble, the first thing we do is to knock at our neighbor’s door. “Have you heard about my trouble? Come and give me your advice.” If your neighbor were prudent, he would say, “My brother, have you gone to God first? I will give you no advice till God has given you His counsel.” It is laughed at as an enthusiastic idea that men should ever take counsel of God. “Oh,” say some, “it is superstitious to imagine that God will ever give to His people guidance in their temporal affairs.” It would be superstitious to you, perhaps, but it is not to a David, and it is not to any other child of God! He says, “My soul, wait you only upon God.” Christian, if you would know the path of duty, take God for your compass! If you would know the way to steer your ship through the dark billows, put the tiller into the hand of the Almighty! Many a rock might be escaped if we would let God take the helm. Many a shoal or quicksand we might well avoid if we would leave to His Sovereign will to choose and to command. The old Puritans said, “As sure as ever a Christian carves for himself, he’ll cut his fingers.” And that is a great truth! Another old divine said, “He that goes before the cloud of God’s providence goes on a fool’s errand.” And so he does! We must mark God’s providence leading us. And then let us go! But he who goes before providence will be very glad to run back again! Take your trouble, whatever it is, to the throne of the Most High and on your knees

put up the prayer, “Lord, direct me!” You will not go wrong. But do not do as some do. Many a person comes to me and says, “I need your advice, Sir. As my minister, perhaps you could tell me what I ought to do.” Sometimes it is about their getting married. Why, they have made up their minds before they ask me, they know that! And then they come to ask my advice. “Do you think that such-and-such a thing would be prudent, sir? Do you think I should change my position in life?” and so on. Now, first of all, I like to know, “Have you made your mind up?” In most cases they have—and I fear we serve God the same way. We make up our mind what we are going to do and often we go down on our knees and say, “Lord, show me what I ought to do.” And then we follow out *our* intention and say, “I asked God’s direction.” My dear friend, you did ask it but you did not follow it—you followed your own. You like God’s direction as long as it points you the way you wish to go. But if God’s direction leads contrary to what you considered your own interest, it might have been a very long while before you had carried it out! But if we in truth and verity confide in God to guide us, we shall not go far wrong—I know!

5. Once again: My soul, wait you only upon God, *for protection in times of danger*. A Naval officer tells the following singular story concerning the siege of Copenhagen under Lord Nelson. An officer in the fleet says, “I was particularly impressed with an objective which I saw three or four days after the terrific bombardment of that place, for several nights before the surrender, the darkness was ushered in with a tremendous roar of guns and mortars, accompanied by the whizzing of those destructive and burning engines of warfare, Congreve’s rockets. “The dreadful effects were soon visible in the brilliant lights through the city. The blazing houses of the rich and the burning cottages of the poor illuminated the heavens. And the wide-spreading flames, reflecting on the water, showed a forest of ships assembled round the city for its destruction. This work of conflagration went on for several nights and the Danes at last surrendered. And on walking some days after among the ruins, consisting of the cottages of the poor, houses of the rich, factories, lofty steeples, and humble meeting houses, I spotted amid this barren field of desolation, a solitary house, unharmed. All around it a burnt mass, but this alone untouched by the fire—a monument of mercy. ‘Whose house is that?’ I asked. ‘That,’ said the interpreter ‘belongs to a Quaker. He would neither fight nor leave his house, but remained in prayer with his family during the whole bombardment.’ Surely, thought I, it is well with the righteous! God *has* been a shield to you in battle, a wall of fire round about you, a very present help in time of need.” It might seem to be an invention of mine; only that it happens to be as authentic a piece of history as any that can be found. There is another story told, somewhat similar of that Danish war. Soon after the surrender of Copenhagen to the English, in the year 1807, detachments of soldiers were for a time stationed in the

surrounding villages. It happened one day that three soldiers, belonging to a Highland regiment, were set to forage among the neighboring farm houses. They went to several but found them stripped and deserted. At length they came to a large garden, or orchard, full of apple trees, bending under the weight of fruit. They entered by a gate and followed a path which brought them to a neat farm house. Everything outside bespoke quietness and security; but as they entered by the front door, the mistress of the house and her children ran screaming out the back! The interior of the house presented an appearance of order and comfort superior to what might be expected from people in that station, and from the habits of the country. A watch hung by the side of the fireplace, and a neat bookcase, well filled, and attracted the attention of the elder soldier. He took down a book—it was written in a language unknown to him, but the name of Jesus Christ was legible on every page. At this moment the master of the house entered by the door through which his wife and children had just fled. One of the soldiers, by threat signs demanded provisions. The man stood firm and undaunted, but shook his head. The soldier who held the book approached him and pointing to the name of Jesus Christ, laid his hand upon his heart, and looked up to heaven. Instantly the farmer grasped his hand, shook it vehemently, and then ran out of the room. He soon returned with his wife and children laden with milk, eggs, bacon, etc., which were freely tendered. When money was offered in return, it was at first refused, but as two of the soldiers were pious men, they, much to the chagrin of their companion, insisted upon paying for all they received. When taking leave, the pious soldiers intimated to the farmer that it would be well for him to hide his watch. By the most significant signs he gave them to understand that he feared no evil, for his trust was in God, and that though his neighbors on the right hand, and on the left had fled from their habitations, and by foraging parties had lost what they could not remove, not a hair of his head had been injured, nor had he even lost an apple from his trees. The man knew that, “He who takes the sword shall perish by the sword,” so he just tried the non-resistant principle. And God, in whom he put implicit confidence, would not let him be injured! It was a remarkable thing that in the massacre of the Protestants in Ireland a long time ago, there were thousands of Quakers in the country, and only two of them were killed. And those two had not faith in their own principles—one of them ran away and hid himself in a forest, and the other kept arms in his house. But the others, unarmed, walked amidst infuriated soldiers, both Roman Catholics and Protestants, and were never touched because they were strong in the strength of Israel’s God, and put up their sword into its scabbard, knowing that to war against another cannot be right, since Christ has said, “Resist not evil; if any man smite you on one cheek, turn to him the other also.” “Be kind, not only to the thankful, but to the un-

thankful, and to the evil.” “Forgive your enemies.” “Bless them who hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you.” But we are ashamed to do that! We do not like it. We are afraid to trust God! And until we do it, we shall not know the majesty of faith, nor prove the power of God for our protection! “My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.”

And now, my dear brothers and sisters, I cannot single out all your cases, but doubtless I have many cases here to which the text will apply. There is a poor Christian there; he does not know much more than where his next meal will come from. My brother, He that feeds the ravens will not let you starve! Instead of looking to find friends to console you, tell your story into the ears of God. As sure as the Bible is true, He will not leave you! Shall a father leave his children to die? No, the granaries of earth have no key but the Almighty’s will! “The cattle on a thousand hills are His.” If He were hungry, He would not tell us. Shall He not supply your needs out of the riches of His goodness?—

***“All things living He does feed—
His full hand supplies their need.”***

Shall He forget you when He clothes the grass of the field, and when He makes the valleys rejoice with food? But is your anxiety about your character? Has someone been slandering you? And are you troubled and grieved, lest you should lose your good name? If a man has called you every name in the world, do not go to law with him. “Wait only upon God.” If you have been reviled in every newspaper and falsely charged in every sheet, never answer—leave it alone. “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord.” Practice non-resistance in words as well as in deeds; just bow yourself and let the missiles fly over your head. Stand not up to resist—to resist slander is to make it worse! The only way to blunt the edge of slander is to be silent—it can do no hurt when we are still. Where no wood is, the fire goes out. And if you will not refute nor answer, the fire will die out by itself. Let it alone. “Wait you only upon God.”

And now, what else is your danger? What else is your trouble? Are you afraid of losing your dearest child? Is your husband sick? Does your wife lie upon the bed of languishing? These are hard troubles; they cut us to the very quick—to see our dear ones sick, and we incapable of helping them is a trouble, indeed. Then the strong man’s eyes weep, and his heart beats heavily because those he loves are sick. But, “wait you only upon God.” Go to your chamber; tell the Lord your dear one is ill. Pour out your heart before Him, and say to Him, “My Lord, spare me this trouble, if it is Your will, take not my friends away. But this know, O God, though You slay me yet will I trust in You. Yes—

***“Should You take them all away,
Yet would I not repine.
Before they were possessed by me
They were entirely Thine.***

***There! Let it go—one look from You
Shall more than make amends.”***

Oh, it is a happy way of smoothing sorrow, when we can say, “We will wait only upon God.” Oh, you agitated Christians; do not dishonor your religion by always wearing a brow of care! Come; cast your burden upon the Lord. I see you staggering beneath a weight which He would not feel; what seems to you a crushing burden would be to Him but as the small dust of the balance. Look, the Almighty bends His shoulders and He says, “Here, put your troubles here. What? Will you bear yourself what the everlasting shoulders are ready to carry?” No—

***“Give to the winds your fears!
Hope and be undismayed.
God hears your sighs, and counts your tears,
He shall lift up your head.”***

There is no finer exhibition of the power of religion than the confidence of a Christian in the time of distress! May God vouchsafe such a carriage and bearing unto us through Jesus Christ!

II. And now I close with the EXPECTATION. And upon that I shall be very brief. The Psalmist charges his soul to wait only upon God because he had no expectation anywhere else but there.

I know very well what some of you are after. You have got an old grandfather, or an old grandmother, or an old great aunt and you are most fiercely kind to them—you are most provokingly loving! You almost run to the extreme of teasing them by the frequency of your affectionate embraces! If your aunt does not know what you do it for, if she needs to know, let her write to me—I can tell her. She has a few thousand pounds! I do not say that you have any *affection* for *them*, but I should not wonder if you have some *expectation* of them and that is the reason why you are always waiting upon her. You will take care of her because you well know which way the wind blows. And you trust that one day, if you put your sails in the right position, there may be a valuable cargo brought to your haven—of course not at all through your design! You will go into deep mourning and lament the old lady’s death, but at the same time you will feel it to be a magnificent consolation to you—almost greater than the suffering and affliction incurred—that you have become the possessor of her wealth. Now, worldly-wise people always wait where their expectations are. David says, “My soul, do not imitate the worldly in this—wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” That is where I expect to get all I shall have and, therefore, I will wait at that door which I expect will be opened with the hand of munificent grace. What is there in the world that you are expecting, except from God? You will not get it, or if you get it, it will be a curse to you! That is only a proper expectation which looks to God and to God only. “My expectation is from Him.” Well, you expect to have bread to eat and raiment to put on till you die, don’t you? Where do you expect to get it? The interest of that

£600, or £1200 of yours in the funds? Well, if that is your expectation, and not God, He will put some bitters in that little income of yours, and you shall find it, if sufficient for your sustenance, not sufficient for your comfort! But you will be provided for because you have a large business! Well, the mill may be burned down. The trade may break. The stream of prosperity may run into another's lap and you may find yourself yet a beggar in the street, notwithstanding all you have, if that is your trust! No, if you are expecting to get anything from the world, it is a poor expectation. I expect to be provided for till I die. But I expect that I shall have to draw from the bank of faith till I die and get all I need out of the riches of God's loving-kindness! And this I know—I had rather have God for my banker than any man that has ever lived! Surely, He never fails to honor His promises! And when we bring them to His throne, He never sends them back unanswered. You must hope in God even for temporal supplies. And after all, what a little thing the temporal supplies are! We have heard of a king who once went into a stable and heard a stable boy singing. Said he to him, "And now, John, what do you get for your work?" "If you please, sir," he said, "I get my clothes and my food." "That is all I get" said the King, "for my work." And that is all everybody gets! All else that you have got besides food and clothes is not yours, except to look at. And other people can do the same. When a man gets a large park, I can ride through it as much as he—and I have not the trouble of keeping it in order—he takes care of it and I am much obliged to him for doing so! I can do as the poor Chinaman did when he bowed before the mandarin. The mandarin was covered with jewels, and the Chinaman said, "I thank you for your jewels." The mandarin was surprised—the next day he was again saluted by the man, who said as before, "I thank you for your jewels." "Why," said the mandarin, "what do you thank me for?" Said the Chinaman, "I always look at them every day, and that is as much as you do—only that you are the pack horse that has to carry them, and you have the trouble at night of taking care of them, while I can enjoy them just as much as you!" And so, dear friends, if we are not rich, contentment can make us so! Contentment gives the poor man broad acres. Contentment gives him great riches upon earth, and adds great enjoyment to the comparatively little that he has.

But we have better expectations than that! We shall die soon; and then "my expectation is from Him." Do we not expect that when we lie upon the bed of sickness, He will send troops of angels to carry us to His bosom? We are believing that when the pulse is faint and few and the heart heaves heavily, that then some spirit, brighter than the noontday sun, shall draw the curtains of our bed and look with loving eyes upon us and whisper, "Sister spirit, come away!" And do we not expect then that a chariot shall be brought, a triumphal chariot such as earth's conquerors have not seen? And in it we shall be placed and drawn by cours-

ers of light up the eternal hills! In majesty and triumph we shall ride to yonder bright gates of pearl! Then shall the gates swing wide open and He shall say, "Come in, you blessed of the Lord; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world." We are expecting wreaths of flowers, and harps of gold, and crowns of glory! We are thinking when we have done with this poor clay, the poor terrestrial stuff this body's made of, we shall be made white, like spirits who now shine as stars before the throne of the majesty on high, and that we shall share those splendors and enjoy their happiness—forever blessed with them—

***"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in."***

Now, "My soul, wait you only upon God," if these are your expectations! And if your expectation is based upon God, my soul, *live* for God—live with only this care—to bless Him! Live looking for a better world, but believing this world to be good enough if we have God in it! You know what Luther said the little bird said to him? He sat upon the spray of the tree and he sang—

***"Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow!
God provides for the morrow!"***

And it chirped and picked up its little grain and sang again! And yet it had no granary; it had not a handful of wheat stored up anywhere; but it still kept on with its chirping—

***"Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow!
God provides for the morrow!"***

Oh, you that are not Christians, it would be worthwhile to be Christians if it were only for the peace and happiness that religion gives! If we had to die like dogs, yet this religion were worth having to make us live here like angels! Oh if the grave were what it seems to be—the goal of all existence; if the black nails in the coffin were not bright with stars; if death were the end, and our lamps were quenched in darkness when it was said, "Dust to dust, and earth to earth"—it would be worthwhile to be a child of God, only to live here!—

***"'Tis religion that can give sweetest pleasures while we live!
'Tis religion must supply solid comforts when we die!"***

Remember, he that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized shall be saved. And you, as well as any other, if these two things are given you, shall be saved! He who trusts in Christ alone for salvation, and then (to translate the word "baptized" the right way, and it can only be rightly translated one way) "is *immersed*, shall be saved." So stands the praise—believing first; baptism afterwards! Believing, the great thing; baptism the *sign* of it! Believing the great means of divine grace; *immersion* the outward and visible sign of the washing of the flesh, and of the dedication unto God! "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." May God give you grace to obey both commands, and so enter into eternal life! But remember, "He that believes not shall be damned." He that

neglects the great essential shall perish! May God grant that none of you may know the terrible meaning of that word!

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LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

NO. 145

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 18, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
Matthew 19:19.*

OUR Savior very often preached upon the moral precepts of the law. Many of the sermons of Christ—and what sermons shall compare with them?—have not what is now currently called “the gospel” in them at all. Our Savior did not, every time He stood up to preach, declare the depravity of man or the doctrine of election, or of limited atonement, or of effectual calling, or of final perseverance. No, He just as frequently spoke upon the duties of human life and upon those precious fruits of the Spirit which are begotten in us by the grace of God. Mark what I have just uttered. You may have started at it at first, but upon diligent reading of the four Evangelists you will find I am correct in stating that very much of our Savior’s time was occupied in telling the people what they ought to do towards one another. And many of His sermons are not what our precise critics would, in these times, call sermons full of unction and savor, for certainly they would be far from savory to the sickly sentimental Christians who do not care about the practical parts of religion! Beloved, it is as much the business of God’s minister to preach man’s duty as it is to preach Christ’s atonement—and unless he does preach man’s duty, he will never be blessed of God to bring man into the proper state to see the beauty of the atonement. Unless he sometimes thunders out the law and claims for his Master the right of obedience to it, he will never be very likely to produce conviction—certainly not that conviction which afterwards leads to conversion! This morning I am aware my sermon will not be very unctuous and savory to you who are always wanting the same round of doctrines—but of this I have but little care. This rough world sometimes needs to be rebuked—and if we can get at the ears of the people, it is our business to reprove them. I think if ever there was a time when this text needed to be enlarged upon it is just now. It is so often forgotten, so seldom remembered, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

I shall notice, first of all the *command*; secondly, I shall try and *bring some reasons for your obedience to it*; and afterwards, I shall draw *some suggestions from the law itself*.

I. First then, THE COMMAND. It is the second great commandment. The first is, “You shall love the Lord your God,” and there the proper

standard is, “You shall love your God *more* than yourself.” The second commandment is, “You shall love your neighbor,” and the standard there is a little lower, but still pre-eminently high, “You shall love your neighbor *as* yourself.” There is the command. We can split it into three parts. *Whom am I to love?* “My neighbor.” *What am I to do?* I am to *love* him. *How am I to do it?* I am to love him *as myself*.

First, who am I to love? I am to love my neighbor. By the word, “neighbor,” we are to understand any person who is near us. It comes from two old words, *nae* or *near*, (*near*), and *buer*, (*to dwell*), persons residing, or being near us and if anyone in the world is near us he is our neighbor! The Samaritan, when he saw the wounded man on the road to Jericho, felt that he was in his neighborhood and that, therefore, he was his neighbor and he was bound to love him. “Love your neighbor.” Perhaps he is in riches and you are poor and you live in your little cottage side-by-side with his lordly mansion. You see his estates; you mark his fine linen and his sumptuous raiment. God has given him these gifts and if He has not given them to you, covet not his wealth and think no hard thoughts concerning him! There will always be differences in the circumstances of man, so let it be. Be content with your own lot if you cannot better it, but do not look upon your neighbor and wish that he were poor as yourself—and do not aid or abet any who would rid him of his wealth to make you rich! Love him and then you can not envy him. Perhaps, on the other hand, you are rich and near you reside the poor. Do not scorn to call them neighbors. Do not scorn to acknowledge that you are bound to love even them. The world calls them your inferiors. In what are they inferior? They are your equals, really, though not so in station. “God has made of one blood all people that dwell on the face of the earth.” You are by no means better than they! They are men and what are you more than that? They may be men in rags, but men in rags are men—and if you are a man arrayed in scarlet you are no more than a man! Take heed that you love your neighbor even though he is in rags! And scorn him not, though he is in the depths of poverty.

Love your neighbor too, *albeit that he is of a different religion*. You think yourself to be of that sect which is the nearest to the truth of God and you have hope that you and your companions who think so well, shall certainly be saved. Your neighbor thinks differently. His religion, you say, is unsound and untrue. Love him for all that! Let not your differences separate him from you. Perhaps he may be right, or he may be wrong. *He* shall be the right in practice who loves the most! Possibly he has no religion at all. He disregards your God; he breaks the Sabbath; he is confessedly an atheist—still love him! Hard words will not convert him; hard deeds will not make him a Christian. Love him straight on. His sin is not against *you* but against *your God*. Your God takes vengeance for sins committed against Him, and you leave him in God’s hands. But if you can do him a kind turn; if you can find anything whereby you can serve him, do it—be it day or night! And if you make any distinction

make it thus—"Because you are not of my religion, I will serve you the more, that you may be converted to the right. Whereas you are a heretic Samaritan, and I an orthodox Jew, you are still my neighbor, and I will love you with the hope that you may give up your temple in Gerizim and come to bow in the temple of God in Jerusalem." Love your neighbor, despite differences in religion!

Love your neighbor, *although he opposes you in trade*. It will be a motto hard to introduce upon the exchange, or in trade, but nevertheless it is one I am bound to preach to you that are merchants and tradesmen. A young man has lately started a shop which you are afraid will damage you. You must not hurt him! You must neither think nor say anything to injure him! Your business is to love him, for though he opposes you in your business, he is your neighbor. There is another one residing near you who is indebted to you. If you should take from him all that he owes you, you will ruin him. But if you let him keep your money for a little while, he may weather the storm and succeed in his endeavors. It is your business to love him as you love yourself. Let him have your money—let him try again and perhaps you shall have your own and he shall be helped, too! With whomever you have dealings in your business, he is your neighbor. With whomever you trade, be he greater or less than you, he is your neighbor and the Christian law *commands* that you shall love your neighbor! It does not merely say that you are not to hate him—it tells you to love him. And though he should thwart your projects; though he should prevent your obtaining wealth; though he should rob you of your custom—yes, though he should obscure your fame—you are bound to love him as yourself! This law makes no exception. Is he near you and have you any dealings with him? Thus says the law, "You shall love him."

Again, you are bound to love your neighbor *though he offends you with his sin*. Sometimes our spirits are overwhelmed and our hearts are grieved when we see the wickedness of our streets. The common reaction with the harlot or the profligate is to drive them out of society as a curse. It is not right. It is not Christian! We are bound to love even *sinner*s and not to drive them from the land of hope, but seek to reclaim even these. Is a man a rogue, a thief, or a liar? I cannot love his roguery, or I should be a rogue myself. I cannot love his lying, or I should be untrue—but I am bound to still love *him* and even though I am wronged by him—yet I must not harbor one vindictive feeling! As I would desire God to forgive me, so I must forgive him! And if he so sins against the law of the land that he is to be punished, (and rightly so), I am to love him in the punishment, for I am not to condemn him to imprisonment vindictively, but I am to do it for his good, that he may be led to repent through the punishment. I am to give him such a measure of punishment as shall be adequate, not as atonement for his crime, but to teach him the evil of it and induce him to forsake it. But let me condemn him with tears in my eyes because I love him! And let me, when he is thrust into prison, take care that all his keepers attend to him with kindness. And although there is a

necessity for sternness and severity in prison discipline, let it not go too far, lest it merge into cruelty and become wanton instead of useful. I am bound to love him though he is sunken in vice and degraded. The law knows of no exception! It claims my love for him. I must love him. I am not bound to take him to my house. I am not bound to treat him as one of my family. There may be some acts of kindness which would be imprudent, seeing that by doing them I might ruin others and reward vice. I am bound to set my *face* against him as I am just, but I feel I ought not to set my *heart* against him for he is my brother! And though the devil has besmeared his face and spits his venom in his mouth so that when he speaks, he speaks in oaths, and when he walks, his feet are swift to shed blood—yet he is a man! And as a man he is my brother and as a brother I am bound to love him. And if by stooping I can lift him up to something like moral dignity, I am wrong if I do not do it! I am bound to love him as I love myself. Oh, I would to God that this great law was fully carried out! Ah, my hearers, you do not love your neighbors, you know you do not! You hardly love all the people who go to the same chapel! Certainly you would not think of loving those who differ from you in opinion—would you? That would be too strange a charity! Why, you hardly love your own brothers and sisters! Some of you today have daggers drawn against them that hung on the same breast. Oh, how can I expect you to love your enemies if you do not love your friends? Some of you have come here angered at your parents and here is a brother who is angry with his sister for a word she said before he left home! Oh, if you cannot love your brothers and sisters, you are worse than heathen men and publicans! How can I expect you to obey this high and mighty command, “Love your neighbors”? But whether you obey it or not, it is mine to preach it and not shift it to a gainsaying generation’s taste. First, we are bound to love and honor all men simply because they are men! And we are to love, next, all those who dwell near us, not for their goodness or serviceableness towards us but simply because the law demands it and they are our neighbors. “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

2. But, now, what am I to do to my neighbor? *Love* him—it is a hard word—*love* him! “Well I believe,” says one, “I never speak an unkind word of any of my neighbors. I do not know that I have ever hurt a person’s reputation in my life. I am very careful to do my neighbor no damage. When I start in business, I do not let my spirit of competition overthrow my spirit of charity. I try not to hurt anybody.” My dear friend, that is right as far as it goes—but it does not go the whole way! It is not enough for you to say you do not hate your neighbor—you are to *love* him! When you see him in the street, it is not sufficient that you keep out of his way and do not knock him down. It is not sufficient that you do not molest him by night, nor disturb his quiet. It is not a negative, it is a *positive* command! It is not *the not doing*, it is the *doing*! You must not injure him, it is true, but you have not done all when you have not done that. You ought to love him. “Well,” says one, “when my neighbors round

about are sick—if they are poor—I take a piece from the meat for dinner and send it to them, that they may have a little food and be refreshed. And if they are exceedingly poor, I lay out my money and see that they are taken care of.” Yes, but you may do this and not love them! I have seen charity thrown to a poor man as a bone is thrown to a dog and there was no love in it! I have seen money given to those who needed it with not one-half the politeness with which hay is given to a horse! “There it is, you need it; I suppose I must give it to you, or people will not think me liberal. Take it; I am sorry you came here. Why don’t you go to somebody else’s house? I am always having paupers hanging on me.” Oh, this is not loving our neighbor, and this is not making him love us! If we had spoken a kind word to him and refused him, he would have loved us better than when we gave to him in an unkind manner. No, though you feed the poor and visit the sick, you have not obeyed the command! Only when your heart goes with your hand, and the kindness of your life bespeaks the kindness of your soul, “You shall love your neighbor.”

And now someone may say, “Sir, I cannot love my neighbor. You may love yours, perhaps, because they may be better than mine, but mine are such an odd set of neighbors, and I do try to love them, but for all I do they do but return insults.” So much the more room for heroism! Would you be some feather-bed warrior, instead of bearing the rough fight of love? Sir, he who dares the most—shall win the most! And if rough is your path of love, tread it boldly and still go on—loving your neighbors through thick and thin! Heap coals of fire on their heads and if they are hard to please, seek not to please *them* but to please *your Master*. And remember, if they spurn your love, your Master has not spurned it and your deed is as acceptable to Him as if it had been acceptable to them! “You shall love your neighbor.”

Now if this love for our neighbor were carried out—love, real love—it would prohibit all *rash anger*. Who is ever angry with himself? I suppose all wise men are, now and then, and I suspect we would not be righteous if we were not sometimes angry. A man who is never angry is not worth a button! He cannot be a good man who will often see things so bad that he must be angry at them. But, remember, you have no right to be angrier with your neighbor than you are with yourself—since you are sometimes vexed with yourself—you may sometimes be vexed with him if he has done wrong. But your anger towards yourself is very short-lived—you soon forgive your own dear self. Well, you are bound just as soon to forgive him and though you speak a rough word, if it is too rough, withdraw it and if it is but rough enough, do not add more to it to make it too much so. State the truth if you are obliged to do it, as kindly as you can. Be no sterner than there is need to be. Deal with others as you would deal with yourself. Above all, harbor no revenge. Never let the sun set on your anger—it is impossible to love your neighbor if you do that! Revenge renders obedience to this command entirely out of the question.

You are bound to love your neighbor—then *do not neglect him*. He may be sick, he may live very near to your house and he will not send for you to call on him. He says, “No, I do not like to trouble him.” Remember, it is your business to find him out. The most worthy of all poverty is that which never asks for pity. See where your neighbors are in need. Do not wait to be told of it, but find it out yourself and give them some help. Do not neglect them. And when you go, go not with the haughty pride which charity often assumes. Go not as some superior being about to bestow a benefaction. But go to your brother as if you were about to pay him a debt which nature makes his due and sit by his side and talk to him. And if he is one that has a high spirit, give him not your charity as a charity. Give it to him in some other way, lest you break his head with the very box of ointment with which you had intended to have anointed him! Be very careful how you speak to him—break not his spirit. Leave your charity behind you and he shall forget that—but he will remember well your kindness towards him in your speech.

Love to our neighbors puts aside every sin that is akin to covetousness and envy—and it makes us at all times ready to serve—ready to be their footstool, if so it must be, that we may be so proved to be the children of Christ. “Well,” says one, “I cannot see that I am always to forgive. You know a worm will turn if it is trod upon.” And is a worm to be your example? A worm will turn, but a Christian will not? I think it foul scorn to take a worm for my example when I have Christ! Christ did not turn—when He was reviled, He reviled not again. When they crucified Him, and nailed Him to the tree, He cried, “Father, forgive them.” Let love, unconquerable love, dwell in your bosom! Love which many waters cannot quench; love which the floods cannot drown. Love your neighbors!

3. And now we have done with this command when we have noticed *how we are to love our neighbor*. It would be a good thing if some ladies loved their neighbors as much as they loved their lap dogs. It would be a fine thing for many a country squire if he loved his neighbors as much as he loved his pack of hounds. I think it might be a high pitch of virtue if some of you were to love your neighbors as much as you love some favorite animal in your house—what an inferior grade of virtue, however, that appears to be! And yet it is something far superior to what some of you have attained to! You do not love your neighbor as you love your house, your estate, or your purse. How high, then, is, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” the gospel *standard*? How much does a man love himself? None of us too little; some of us too much. You may love yourself as much as you please, but take care that you love your neighbor as much! I am certain you need no exhortation to love yourself. Your own case will be well seen to; your own comfort will be a very primary theme of your anxiety. You will line your own nest well with downy feathers if you can. There is no need to exhort you to love yourself—you will do that well enough! Well, then, as much as you love yourself, love your neighbor! And mark, by this is meant—*your enemy*—the man who opposes you in

trade and the man of another class—you ought to love him as you love yourself. Oh, it would turn the world upside down, indeed, if this were practiced! A fine lever this would be for upsetting many things that have now become the custom of the land! In England we have a caste almost as strong as in Hindustan. My Lord will not speak to anyone who is a little beneath himself in dignity. And he who has the next degree of dignity thinks the tradesman infinitely below him. And he who is a tradesman thinks a mechanic scarcely worth his notice! The mechanics according to their grades have their castes and classes, too. Oh, for the day when these shall be broken down! When the impulse of the one blood shall be felt and when as one family each shall love the other and feel that one class depends upon the other! It would be well if each would strive to help and love the other as he ought. My fine lady, in your silks and satins, you have gone to church many a day and sat side by side with a poor old woman in her red cloak who is as good a saint as you could be. But do you ever speak to her? Never in your life! You would not speak to her, poor soul, because you happen to be worth more hundreds of pounds a year than she is shillings! There are you, Sir John, you come to your place and you expect everyone to be eminently respectful to you, as indeed, they ought to be, for we are all honorable men and the same text that says, "Honor the king," says also, "Honor all men." And so we are bound to honor all of them! But you think that you, above all men, are to be worshipped! You do not condescend to men of mean estate. My dear sir, you would be a greater man by one-half if you were not to appear so great! Oh, I say again, blessed be Christ, blessed be His Father for this commandment and blessed be the world when the commandment shall be obeyed and we shall love our neighbors as ourselves!

II. And now I shall have to give REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD OBEY THIS COMMAND.

The best reason in the entire world is that with which we will begin. We are bound to love our neighbors because *God commands it*. To the Christian there is no argument as potent as God's will. God's will is the believer's law. He does not ask what shall it profit him, what shall be the good effect of it upon others but he simply says, "Does my Father say it? Oh, Holy Spirit, help me to obey not because I may see how it shall be always good for me, but simply because You command it!" It is the Christian's privilege to do God's commandments, "hearkening to the voice of His Word." But some other reason may prevail more with others of you who are not Christians.

Let me remark, then, *that selfishness, itself, would bid you love your neighbors!* Oh, strange that selfishness should preach a suicidal sermon, but yet if Self could speak, it might if it were wise, deliver an oration like this. "Self, love your neighbor, for then your neighbor will love you! Self, help your neighbor, for then your neighbor will help you! Make to yourself, O Self, friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when you need help they may receive you into abiding habitations. Self, you want

ease—make yourself easy by treating everybody well! Self, you want pleasure—you can get no pleasure if those around you hate you. Make them love you, dear Self—and so shall you bless yourself.” Yes, even if you are selfish, I wish you were so pre-eminently selfish and so wisely selfish that you would love others to make yourselves happy!

The shortcut to be happy yourself is to try to make others happy! The world is bad enough, but it is not so bad as not to feel the power of kindness. Treat servants well! There are some of them who you can't mend at all, but treat them well and as a rule they will treat you well. Treat your masters well. Some of them are gruff and bad enough, but as a class they know good servants and they will treat you well. There, now, if I would wish to be happy, I would not ask to have the wealth of this world nor the things that men call comforts. The best comforts that I should desire would be loving ones round about me and a sense that where I went, I scattered happiness and made men glad. That is the way to be happy and selfishness, itself, might say, “Love your neighbor,” for in so doing you love yourself; for there is such a connection between him and you that in loving him, the stream of your love returns into your own heart again!

But I shall not assail you with such a paltry motive as that. It is too poor for a Christian. It should be too base even for a man! Love your neighbor, in the next place, *because that will be the way to do good in the world*. You are philanthropists. Some of you subscribe to missionary societies. You subscribe to the society for orphans and other charitable projects. I am persuaded that these institutions, though they are excellent and good things, are in some respects a loss—for now a man gives to a society one-tenth of what he would have given himself and where an orphan would have been kept by a single family, ten families join together to keep that orphan and so there is about one-tenth of the charity! I think the man who has the time is bound to give nothing at all to societies but to give himself. Be your own society. If there is a society for the sick—if you have enough money, be your own sick society. If you have the time, go and visit the sick! Then you will know the money is well spent and you will spare the expense of a secretary! There is a society for finding soup for the poor. Make your own soup. Give it yourself and if everyone who gives his half-a-crown to the society would just spend half-a-sovereign to give the soup away himself, there would be more done! Societies are good. God forbid that I should speak against them. Do all you can for them—but I am still afraid that sometimes they thwart *individual effort* and I know they rob us of a part of the pleasure which we should have in our own charity—the pleasure of seeing the gleaming eyes and of hearing the grateful words when we have been our own social worker!

Dear friends, remember that man's good requires that you should be kind to your fellow creatures. The best way for you to make the world better is to be kind yourself. Are you a preacher? Preach in a surly way and in a surly tone to your church, a pretty church you will make of it

before long! Are you a Sunday school teacher? Teach your children with a frown on your face, a fine lot they will learn! Are you a master? Do you hold family prayer? Get in a passion with your servants and say, "Let us pray." A vast amount of devotion you will develop in such a manner as that! Are you a warden of a jail and have prisoners under you? Abuse them and ill-treat them and then send the chaplain to them—a fine preparation for the reception of the Word of God! You have poor around you—you say you wish to see them elevated. You are always grumbling about the poverty of their dwellings and the meanness of their tastes. Go and make a great stir at them all—a fine way that would be to improve them! Now, just wash your face of that black frown and buy a little of the essence of summer somewhere and put it on your face and have a smile on your lips and say, "I love you. I am no cant, but I love you and as far as I can, I will prove my love to you. What can I do for you? Can I help you over a stile? Can I give you any assistance, or speak a kind word to you? I think I could see after your little daughter. Can I fetch the doctor for your wife, now she is ill?" All these kind things would be making the world a little better. Your jails and gallows and all that have never made the world better yet! You may hang men as long as you like. You will never stop murder. Hang us all, we would not be much the better for it! There is no necessity for hanging any—it will never improve the world! Deal gently, deal kindly, deal lovingly, and there is not a wolf in human shape but will be melted by kindness. And there is not a tiger in woman's form but will break down and ask for pardon if God should bless the love that is brought to bear upon her by her friend! I say again, for the world's good, love your neighbors.

And now, once more, love your neighbor, *for there is a great deal of misery in the world that you do not know of.* We have often spoken hard words to poor miserable souls. We did not know their misery, but we should have known it, we should have found it out. Shall I tell you, my friend landlord, you went yesterday to get a warrant against a poor woman that has three children. Her husband died a long while ago. She was three weeks late in her rent. The last time, to pay you, she sold off her late husband's watch and her own wedding ring. It was all that she had that was dear to her and she paid you. And you went to her the next week and she begged a little patience and you think yourself highly exemplary because you had that little patience. "The woman," you have said, "I dare say, is good for nothing. And if not, it is no particular business of mine whether she has three children, or none—rent is rent! And business is business." Out she goes directly. Oh, if you could have seen that woman's heart when she stood penniless and houseless and knew not where to send the children for the night, you would have said, "Never mind, my good woman, stay there. I cannot turn a widow out of house and home." You did not do it yourself, did you? No, but you sent your agent to do it and the sin lay on you just as much for all that! You had no right to do it. You had a right in the eye of man's law, but God's law

says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." A young man called upon you a little time ago. He said, "Sir, you know my little business. I have been struggling very hard and you have kindly let me have some things on credit. But through the pressure of the times, I don't know how it is; I seem to be very hard up. I think, sir, if I could weather the next month, I might be able to get on well. I have every prospect of having a trade, yet if I could but have a little more credit, if you could possibly allow it." "Young man," you have said, "I have had a great many bad debts lately. Besides you do not bring me any good security. I cannot trust you." The young man bowed and left you. You did not know how he bowed in spirit as well as in body. That young man had a poor old mother and two sisters in the house and he had tried to establish a little business that he might earn bread and cheese for them as well as for himself; for the last month they have eaten scarcely anything but bread and butter! The weakest tea has been their drink and he has been striving hard. But someone poorer than he seemed to be, did not pay him the little debt that was due to him—and he could not pay you. And if you had helped him, it might have been all well with him. And now what to do, he cannot tell. His heart is broken; his soul is swollen within him. That aged mother of his and those girls, what shall become of them? You did not know his agony, or else you would have helped him. But you ought to have known! You never should have dismissed his case until you had known a little more about him. It would not be business-like, would it? No, sir, to be business-like is sometimes to be devil-like! But I would not have you business-like when it is so. Away with your business! Be Christian-like. If you are professors, seek to serve God in obeying His command—"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

"No," says another, "but I am always very kind to the poor." There is a lady here who has got a tolerable share of money to spare and to her, money is about as common as pins. And she goes to see the poor. And when she gets in, they set her a chair and she sits down and begins to talk to them about economy and gives them a tolerably good lecture on that. The poor souls wonder how they are to economize any more than they do—they eat nothing but bread and they cannot see that they can get anything much cheaper! Then she begins to exhort them about cleanliness and makes about 50 impertinent remarks about the children's clothes. "Now," she says, "my good woman, before I leave you I will give you this tract. It is about drunkenness. Perhaps you will give it to your husband." If she does, he will beat her, you may depend upon it! "Come now," she says, "here is a shilling for you." And now, My Lady thinks, "I love my neighbor." Did you shake hands with her? "No, sir." Did you speak lovingly to her? "Of course not! She is an inferior." Then you did not obey this command, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Shall I tell you what happened after you left? That woman as soon as ever you were gone began to cry. She started off to the minister for consolation. She said to him, "Do you know, sir, I am very thankful to God that I have had

a little relief given me this morning, but my spirit was almost broken. Do you know, sir, we used to be in better circumstances. This morning Mrs. So-and-So came and talked to me in such a way as if I had been a dog! Or as if I had been a child and though she gave me a shilling, I did not know what to do. I wanted the shilling bad enough, or else I really think I would have thrown it at her! She talked in such a way I could not bear it. Now, if you come to see me, sir, I know you will speak kindly to me and if you give me nothing you will not abuse me and find fault with me. Oh," she said, "my heart is broken within me! I cannot bear this, for we have seen better days and we have been used to different treatment than this." Now, My Lady, you did *not* love her! Your shilling—what was the good of it if you did not put a little love on it? You might have made it as good as a golden sovereign if you had spread a little love upon it! She would have thought far more of it. "Love your neighbors." Oh! would to God that I could always practice it myself, and would that I could impress it into all of your hearts! Love your neighbor as you love yourself.

And now the last argument I shall use is one especially appropriate to the Christian. Christian, your religion claims your love—Christ loved you before you loved Him! He loved you when there was nothing good in you. He loved you though you insulted Him, though you despised Him and rebelled against Him. He has loved you right on and never ceased to love you. He has loved you in your backslidings and loved you out of them. He has loved you in your sins, in your wickedness and folly. His loving heart is still eternally the same and He shed His heart's blood to prove His love for you! He has given you what you need on earth, and provided for you an habitation in heaven. Now Christian, your religion claims from you that you should love as your Master loved. How can you imitate Him, unless you love, too? We will leave to the Muslims, to the Jew and to the infidel, cold-heartedness and unkindness—it would be more in keeping with their views. But with you, unkindness is a strange anomaly—it is a gross contradiction to the spirit of your religion—and if you love not your neighbor, I see not how you can be a true follower of the Lord Jesus!

And now I conclude with just a weighty suggestion or two and I will not weary you. My text suggests first, *the guilt of us all*. My friends, if this is God's law, who here can plead that he is not guilty? If God's law demands I should love my neighbor, I must stand in my pulpit and confess my guilt! In thinking of this text yesterday, my eyes ran with tears at the recollection of many a hard thing I had spoken in unwary moments. I thought of many an opportunity of loving my neighbor that I had slighted and I labored to confess the sin! I am certain there is not one of all this immense audience who would not do the same if he felt this law applied by the Spirit in power to his soul. Oh, are we not guilty? Kindest of spirits, most benevolent of souls, are you not guilty? Will you not confess it? And then that suggests this remark—if no man can be saved by his works unless he keeps this law *perfectly*—who can be saved by his works? Have any of you loved your neighbor all your life with all your

heart? Then shall you be saved by your own deeds if you have not broken any other commandment! But if you have not done it and you cannot do it, then hear the sentence of the law—you have sinned and you shall perish for your sin—hope not to be saved by the mandate of the law! And oh, how this endears the gospel to me! If I have broken this law—and I have—and if I cannot enter heaven with this law broken, precious is the Savior who can wash me from all my sins in His blood! Precious is He who can forgive my lack of charity and pardon; my lack of kindness—can forgive my roughness and my rudeness, can put away all my harsh speaking, my bigotry and unkindness—and can through His all-atoning Sacrifice give me a seat in heaven, notwithstanding all my sins! You are sinners this morning—you must feel it—my sermon, if blessed of God, must convince you all of guilt! Well, then, as sinners, let me preach to you the gospel! “Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus shall be saved.” Though we have broken this law, God shall forgive us and put a new heart and a right spirit into our bosom—whereby we shall be enabled to keep the law in the future—at least to an eminent degree and shall, by-and-by, attain to a crown of life in Glory everlasting!

Now, I do not know whether I have been personal to anyone this morning. I sincerely hope I have. I *meant* to be! I know there are a great many characters in the world who must have a cap made exactly to fit them, or else they will never wear it. I have tried as near as I could to do it. If you will not say, “How well that applied to my neighbor,” but just for *once* say, “How well it applied to *me*”; I shall hope that there will be some good follow-up from this exhortation! And though the Antinomian may turn away and say, “Ah, it was only a legal sermon,” my love to that precious Antinomian! I do not care about his opinion. My Savior preached like that, and I shall do the same. I believe it is right that Christians should be told what they should do, and that worldlings should know what Christianity will lead us to do—so that the highest standard of love, of kindness, and of law should be uplifted in the world, and kept constantly before the people’s eyes!

May God bless you and be with you, for Jesus’ sake!

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THE GOOD MAN'S LIFE AND DEATH

NO. 146

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 16, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”
Philippians 1:21.*

HOW ominously these words follow each other in the text—“live,” “die.” There is but a comma between them, and surely as it is in the words, so is it in reality! How brief the distance between life and death! In fact there is none. Life is but death's vestibule and our pilgrimage on earth is but a journey to the grave. The pulse that preserves our being beats our death march and the blood which circulates our life is floating it onward to the deeps of death. Today we see our friends in health—tomorrow we hear of their decease. We clasped the hand of the strong man but yesterday and today we close his eyes. We rode in the chariot of comfort but an hour ago and in a few more hours the last black chariot must convey us to the home of all living. Oh, how closely allied is death to life! The lamb that sports in the field must soon feel the knife. The ox that lows in the pasture is fattening for the slaughter. Trees do but grow that they may be felled. Yes, and greater things than these feel death! Empires rise and flourish—they flourish but to decay—they rise to fall. How often do we take up the volume of history and read of the rise and fall of empires. We hear of the coronation and the death of kings. Death is the black servant who rides behind the chariot of life. See life, and death is close behind it! Death reaches far throughout this world and has stamped all terrestrial things with the broad arrow of the grave. Stars may even die. It is said that conflagrations have been seen far off in the distant ether and astronomers have marked the funerals of worlds, the decay of those mighty orbs that we had imagined set forever in sockets of silver to glisten as the lamps of eternity! But blessed be God, there is one place where death is not life's brother, where life reigns alone. “To live,” is not the first syllable which is to be followed by the next, “to die.” There is a land where death knells are never tolled, where winding-sheets are never woven, where graves are never dug. Blessed land beyond the skies! To reach it we must die—but if after death we obtain a glorious immortality, our text is indeed true—“To die is gain.”

If you would get a fair estimate of the happiness of any man, you must judge him in these two closely connected things—his life and his death. The heathen Solon said, “Call no man happy until he is dead, for you know not what changes may pass upon him in life.” We add to that—Call no man happy until he is dead, because the life that is to come, if that is miserable, shall far outweigh the highest life of happiness that has been enjoyed on earth! To estimate a man's condition, we must take it in all its length. We must not measure that one thread which reaches from the cradle to the coffin—we must go further! We must go from the coffin to the resurrection and from the resurrection on throughout eternity. To know whether acts are profitable, I must not estimate their effects on me for the hour in which I live, but for the eternity in which I am to exist! I must not weigh matters in the scales of time. I must not calculate by the hours, minutes and seconds of the clock, but I must count and value things by the ages of eternity!

Come, then, beloved. We have before us the picture of a man—the two sides of whose existence will, both of them, bear inspection! We have his life, we have his death—we have it said of his life, “*to live is Christ.*” Of his death, “*to die is gain.*” And if the same shall be said of any of you, oh, you may rejoice! You are among that thrice happy number whom the Lord has loved and whom He delights to honor!

We shall now divide our text very simply into these two points, *the good man's life, and the good man's death.*

I. As to HIS LIFE, we have that briefly described thus—“For me to live is Christ.” The believer did not always live to Christ. When he was first born into this world he was a slave of sin and an heir of wrath, even as others. Though he may have afterwards become the greatest of saints, yet until divine grace has entered his heart, he is “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” He only begins to live to Christ when God the Holy Spirit convicts him of his sin and of his desperate evil nature—when by divine grace he is brought to see the dying Savior making a propitiation for his guilt. From that moment when, by faith, he sees the slaughtered victim of Calvary and casts his whole life on Him—to be saved, to be redeemed, to be preserved and to be blessed by the virtue of His atonement and the greatness of His grace—from that moment the man begins to live to Christ!

And now shall we tell you as briefly as we can what living to Christ means.

It means, first, that *the life of a Christian derives its parentage from Christ.* “For me to live is Christ.” The righteous man has two lives. He has one which he inherited from his parents. He looks back to an ancestral

race of which he is the branch and he traces his life to the parent stock. But he has a second life, a *spiritual* life, a life which is as much above mere mental life as mental life is above the life of the animal or the plant! And for the source of this spiritual life he looks not to father or mother, nor to priest nor man, nor to himself—he looks to Christ! He says, “O Lord Jesus, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, You are my spiritual parent. Unless Your Spirit had breathed into my nostrils the breath of a new, holy and spiritual life, I had been to this day ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’ I owe my third principle, my spirit, to the implantation of Your grace. I had a body and a soul by my parents. I have received the third principle, the spirit from You and in You I live and move and have my being. My new, my best, my highest, my most heavenly life is wholly derived from You. To You I ascribe it. My life is hid with Christ in God. It is no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me.” And so the Christian says, “For me to live is Christ,” because for me to live is to live a life whose parentage is not of human origin, but of divine, even of Christ Himself! Again he intended to say that *Christ was the sustenance of his life*, the food his newborn spirit is fed upon. The believer has three parts to be sustained. The body, which must have its proper nutriment; the soul, which must have knowledge and thought to supply it, and the spirit which must feed on Christ. Without bread I become weakened to a skeleton and at last I die. Without thought my mind becomes dwarfed and dwindles itself until I become the idiot with a soul that has life but little more. And without Christ my newborn spirit must become a vague shadowy emptiness. It cannot live unless it feeds on that heavenly manna which came down from heaven. Now the Christian can say, “The life that I live is Christ,” because Christ is the food on which he feeds and the sustenance of his newborn spirit!

The apostle also meant that *the fashion of his life was Christ*. I suppose that every man living has a model by which he endeavors to shape his life. When we start in life, we generally select some person, or persons, whose combined virtues shall be to us the mirror of perfection. “Now,” says Paul, “if you ask me after what fashion I mold my life and what is the model by which I would sculpture my being, I tell you it is Christ. I have no fashion, no form, no model by which to shape my being except the Lord Jesus Christ.” Now, the true Christian, if he is an upright man, can say the same. Understand, however, what I mean by the word, “*upright*.” An upright man means a straight-up man—a man that does not cringe and bow and fawn to other men’s feet. A man that does not lean for help on other men but just stands with his head heavenward, in all the dignity of his independence, leaning nowhere except on

the arm of the omnipotent! Such a man will take Christ alone to be his model and pattern. This is the very age of conventionalities. People dare not now do a thing unless everybody else does the same. You do not often say, "Is a thing right?" The most you say is, "Does So-and-So do it?" You have some great personage or other in your family connection who is looked upon as being the very standard of all propriety. And if he does it, then you think you may safely do it! And oh, what an outcry there is against a man who dares to be singular, who believes that some of your conventionalities are shackles and chains and kicks them all to pieces and says, "I am free!" The world is at him in a minute! All the bad dogs of malice and slander are at him because he says, "I will not follow your model! I will vindicate the honor of my Master and not take your great masters to be forever my pattern." Oh, I would to God that every statesman, that every minister, that every Christian were free to hold that his only form and his only fashion for imitation must be the character of Christ! I would that we could scorn all superstitious attachments to the ancient errors of our ancestors! And while some would be forever looking upon age and upon hoary antiquity with veneration, I wish we had the courage to look upon a thing not according to its age, but according to its rightness—and so weigh everything not by its novelty, or by its antiquity—but by its conformity to Christ Jesus and His holy gospel! Then we would reject that which does not conform to Jesus, though it is hoary with years. Then we would believe only that which is—even though it is but the creature of the day and, saying with earnestness—"For me to live is not to imitate this man or the other but 'for me to live is Christ!'"

I think, however, that the very center of Paul's idea would be this: *The end of his life is Christ*. You think you see Paul land upon the shores of Philippi. There, by the riverside were ships gathered and many merchant men. There you would see the merchant busy with his ledger and looking over his cargo as he paused and put his hand upon his brow and said as he griped his moneybag, "For me to live is *gold*." And there you see his humbler clerk, employed in some plainer work, toiling for his master and he, perspiring with work, mutters between his teeth, "For me to live is to gain a bare *subsistence*." And there stands for a moment to listen to him, one with a studious face and a sallow countenance and with a roll full of the mysterious characters of wisdom. "Young man," he says, "for me to live is *learning*." "Aha, aha," says another, who stands by, clothed in mail with a helmet on his head, "I scorn your modes of life—for me to live is *glory!*" But there walks one, a humble tent maker, called Paul. You see the lineaments of the Jew upon his face and he steps into the middle of them all and says, "For me to live is Christ." Oh, how they smile with

contempt upon him and how they scoff at him for having chosen such an objective! "For me to live is Christ." And what did he mean? The learned man stopped and said, "Christ? Who is He? Is He that foolish, mad fellow, of whom I have heard, who was executed upon Calvary for sedition?" The meek reply is, "It is He who died, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." "What?" says the Roman soldier, "And do you live for a man who died a slave's death? What glory will you get by fighting His battles?" "What profit is there in your preaching?" chimes in the trader! Ah, and even the merchant's clerk thought Paul mad! For he said, "How can he feed his family? How will he supply his needs if all he lives for is to honor Christ?" Yes, but Paul knew what he meant. He was the wisest man of them all! He knew which way was right for heaven and which would end the best. But, right or wrong, his soul was wholly possessed with the idea—"For me to live is Christ."

Brothers and sisters, can you say, as professing Christians, that you live up to the idea of the apostle Paul? Can you honestly say that for you to live is Christ? I will tell you my opinion of many of you. You join our churches. You are highly respectable men. You are accepted among us as true and real Christians. But in all honesty and truth I do not believe that for you to live is Christ! I see many of you whose whole thoughts are engrossed with the things of earth. The mere getting of money. The amassing of wealth seems to be your only objective. I do not deny that you are generous—I will not dare to say that you are not generous and that your checkbook does not often bear the mark of some subscription for holy purposes! But I dare to say, after all, that you cannot in honesty say that you live wholly for Christ. You know that when you go to your shop or your warehouse you do not think, in doing business, that you are doing it for Christ. You dare not be such a hypocrite as to say so! You must say that you do it for self-aggrandizement and for family advantage. "Well!" says one, "and is that a wicked reason?" By no means! Not for you, if you are wicked enough to ask that question—but for the Christian it is—he professes to live for Christ! Then how is it that anyone dares to profess to live for his Master and yet does not do so, but lives for mere worldly gain? Let me speak to many a lady here. You would be shocked if I should deny your Christianity! You move in the highest circles of life and you would be astonished if I should presume to touch your piety after your many generous donations to religious societies. But I dare to do so! You—what do you do? You rise late enough in the day—you have your carriage out and call to see your friends, or leave your card by way of proxy. You go to a party in the evening. You talk nonsense and come home and go to bed. And that is your life from the beginning of the year

to the end! It is just one regular round. There comes the dinner or the ball and the conclusion of the day. And then, Amen, so be it, forever. Now you don't live for Christ! I know you go to church regularly, or attend at some dissenting church. All well and good. I shall not deny your piety according to the common usage of the term—but I do deny that you have got to anything like the place where Paul stood when he said, "For me to live is Christ."

I, too, my brothers and sisters, know that with much earnest seeking I have failed to realize the fullness of entire devotion to the Lord Jesus. Every minister must sometimes chasten himself and say, "Am I not sometimes a little warped in my utterances? Did I not in some sermon aim to bring out a grand thought instead of stating a home truth? Have I not kept back some warning that I ought to have uttered because I feared the face of man?" Have we not all good need to chasten ourselves because we must say that we have not lived for Christ as we should have done? And yet there are, I trust, a noble few, the elite of God's elect—a few chosen men and women on whose heads there is the crown and diadem of dedication. They can truly say, "I have nothing in this world I cannot give to Christ—I have said it and mean what I have said—

***'Take my soul and body's powers,
All my goods and all my hours,
All I have and all I am.'***

Take me, Lord, and take me forever." These are the men who make our missionaries. These are the women to make our nurses for the sick. These are they who would dare death for Christ! These are they who would give of their substance to His cause. These are they who would spend and be spent, who would bear ignominy and scorn and shame if they could but advance their Master's interest! How many of this sort have I here this morning? Might I not count many of these benches before I could find a score? Many there are who do, in a measure, carry out this principle. But who among us is there (I am sure he stands not here in this pulpit) that can dare to say he has lived wholly for Christ, as the apostle did? And yet, till there are more Pauls and more men and women dedicated to Christ, we shall never see God's kingdom come, nor shall we hope to see His will done on earth, even as it is in heaven!

Now, this is the true life of a Christian—its source, its sustenance, its fashion and its end all gathered up in two words—Christ Jesus! And I must add, its happiness and its glory is all in Christ. But I must detain you no longer.

II. I must go to the second point, THE DEATH OF THE CHRISTIAN. Alas, alas, that the good should die! Alas, that the righteous should fall! Death, why do you not hew the deadly upas tree? Why do you not mow

the hemlock? Why do you touch the tree beneath whose spreading branches weariness has rest? Why do you touch the flower whose perfume has made glad the earth? Death, why do you snatch away the excellent of the earth in whom is all our delight? If you have to use your axe, use it upon the cumber grounds, the trees that draw nourishment but afford no fruit! You might then be thanked—but why will you cut down the cedars, why will you fell the goodly trees of Lebanon? O Death, why do you not spare the church? Why must the pulpit be hung in black. Why must the missionary station be filled with weeping? Why must the pious family lose its priest and the house its head? O Death, what are you doing? Touch not earth's holy things! Your hands are not fit to pollute the Israel of God! Why do you put your hand upon the hearts of the elect? Oh stop! Stop! Spare the righteous, Death, and take the evil! But no, it must not be. Death comes and smites the best of us all. The most generous, the most prayerful, the most holy, the most devoted must die! Weep, weep, weep, O church, for you have lost your martyrs! Weep, O church, for you have lost your confessors! Your holy men are fallen! Howl, fir tree, for the cedar has fallen! The godly fail and the righteous are cut off! But stay awhile. I hear another voice. Say you unto the daughter of Judah, spare your weeping. Tell the Lord's flock, cease, cease your sorrow. Your martyrs are dead but they are glorified! Your ministers are gone but they have ascended up to your Father and to their Father! Your brothers and sisters are buried in the grave, but the archangel's trumpet shall awake them and their spirits are ever now with God.

Hear the words of the text, by way of consolation, "To die is gain." Not such gain as you wish for, you son of the miser. Not such gain as you are hunting for, you man of covetousness and self-love. A higher and a better gain is that which death brings to a Christian!

My dear friends, when I discoursed upon the former part of the verse, it was all plain. No proof was needed. You believed it, for you saw it clearly. "To live is Christ," has no paradox in it. But, "To die is gain," is one of the gospel riddles which only the Christian can truly understand. To die is not gain if I look upon the merely visible. To die is loss, it is not gain. Has not the dead man lost his wealth? Though he had piles of riches, can he take anything with him? Has it not been said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return there"? "Dust you are and unto dust shall you return." And which of all your goods can you take with you? The man had a fair estate and a goodly mansion. He has lost that. He can no more tread those painted halls nor walk those lush green lawns. He had abundance of fame and honor. He has lost that, so far as his own sense of it is concerned, though still the harp string trembles at

his name. He has lost his wealth and though he may be buried in a costly tomb, yet is he as poor as the beggar who looked upon him in the street in envy. That is not gain, it is loss! And he has lost his friends—he has left behind him a sorrowing wife and children, fatherless, without his guardian care. He has lost the friend of his bosom, the companion of his youth. Friends are there to weep over him, but they cannot cross the river with him. They drop a few tears into his tomb but with him they must not and cannot go. And has he not lost all his learning, though he has toiled ever so much to fill his brain with knowledge? What is he now above the servile slave, though he has acquired all knowledge of earthly things? Is it not said—

***“Their memory and their love are lost
Alike unknowing and unknown”?***

Surely death is loss. Has he not lost the songs of the sanctuary and the prayers of the righteous? Has he not lost the solemn assembly and the great gathering of the people? No more shall the promise enchant his ears; no more shall the glad tidings of the gospel wake his soul to melody. He sleeps in the dust, the Sabbath bell tolls not for him. The sacramental emblems are spread upon the table, but not for him. He has gone to his grave. He knows not that which shall be after him. There is neither work nor device in the grave to where we all are hastening. Surely death is loss. When I look upon you, you clay-cold corpse and see you just preparing to be the palace of corruption and the carnival for worms, I cannot think that you have gained! When I see that your eyes have lost light and your lips have lost their speech and your ears have lost hearing and your feet have lost motion and your heart has lost its joy—when I see they who look out of the windows dressed in black and no sounds of the harp wake up your joys, O clay-cold corpse, than have you lost, lost immeasurably!

And yet my text tells me it is not so—it says, “To die is *gain*.” It looks as if it could not be thus and certainly it is not, so far as I can see. But put to your eye the telescope of *faith*—take that magic glass which pierces through the veil that parts us from the unseen. Anoint your eyes with eye salve and make them so bright that they can pierce the ether and see the unknown worlds! Come, bathe yourself in this sea of light and live in holy revelation and belief! Then look and oh, how changed the scene! Here is the corpse but there the spirit. Here is the clay but there the soul, here is the carcass but there the seraph. He is supremely blessed—his death is gain! Come now, what did he lose? I will show that in everything he lost, he gained far more. He lost his friends, did he? His wife and his children, his brothers and sisters in church fellowship are all left

to weep his loss. Yes, he lost them but, my brothers and sisters what did he gain? He gained more friends than he ever lost! He had lost many in his lifetime but he meets them all again. Parents, brothers and sisters who had died in youth or age and passed the stream before him—all salute him on the further brink! There the mother meets her infant. There the father meets his children. There the venerable patriarch greets his family to the third and fourth generation! There brother clasps brother to his arms and husband meets with wife, no more to be married or given in marriage, but to live together like the angels of God! Some of us have more friends in heaven than on earth. We have more dear relations in glory than we have here. It is not so with all of us, but with some it is so—more have crossed the stream than are left behind. But if it is not so, yet what friends we have to meet us there! Oh, I reckon on the day of death it were much gain if it were for the mere hope of seeing the bright spirits that are now before the throne; to clasp the hand of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; to look into the face of Paul the apostle, and grasp the hand of Peter; to sit in flowery fields with Moses and David; to bask in the sunlight of bliss with John and Magdalene. Oh how blessed! The company of poor imperfect saints on earth is good, but how much better the society of the redeemed! Death is no loss to us by way of friends. We leave a few, a little band below and say to them, “Fear not little flock,” and we ascend and meet the armies of the living God, the hosts of His redeemed! “To die is gain.” Poor corpse! You have lost your friends on earth—but no, bright spirit—you have received a hundred-fold in heaven!

What else did we say he lost? We said he lost all his estate, all his substance and his wealth. Yes, but he has gained infinitely more. Though he were rich as Croesus, yet he might well give up his wealth for that which he has attained. Were his fingers bright with pearls and have they lost their brilliance? The pearly gates of heaven glisten brighter by far! Had he gold in his storehouse? Mark you, the streets of heaven are paved with gold and he is richer by far! The mansions of the redeemed are far brighter dwelling places than the mansions of the richest here below. But it is not so with many of you. You are not rich, you are poor. What can you lose by death? You are poor here, you shall be rich there! Here you suffer toil, there you shall rest forever! Here you earn your bread by the sweat of your brow but there, no toil! Here wearily you cast yourself upon your bed at the week's end and sigh for the Sabbath—but there Sabbaths have no end! Here you go to the house of God but you are distracted with worldly cares and thoughts of suffering. But there, there are no groans to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues! Death will be gain to you in point of riches and substance.

And as for the *means of divine grace* which we leave behind—what are they when compared with what we shall have hereafter? Oh, might I die at this hour, I think I would say something like this, “Farewell Sabbaths—I am going to the eternal Sabbath of the redeemed! Farewell minister; I shall need no candle, neither light of the sun, when the Lord God shall give me light, and be my life forever and ever! Farewell you songs and sonnets of the blessed; farewell—I shall not need your melodious burst—I shall hear the eternal and unceasing hallelujahs of the beatified! Farewell prayers of God’s people; my spirit shall hear forever the intercessions of my Lord, and join with the noble army of martyrs in crying, ‘O Lord, how long?’ Farewell O Zion! Farewell house of my love, home of my life! Farewell temples where God’s people sing and pray! Farewell tents of Jacob where they daily burn their offering—I am going to a better Zion than you, to a brighter Jerusalem, to a temple that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God!” O my dear friends, in the thought of these things, do we not, some of us, wish we could die!—

***“Even now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before,
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
Upon the eternal shore!
One army of the living God,
At His command we bow—
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.”***

We have not come to the margin yet, but we shall be there soon—we soon expect to die.

And again, one more thought. We said that when men died they lost their knowledge; we correct ourselves. Oh, no, when the righteous die, they know infinitely more than they could have known on earth—

***“There shall I see and hear and know
All I desired or wished below!
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy!”***

“Here we see through a glass darkly but there face to face.” There what “eye has not seen nor ear heard” shall be fully manifest to us! There riddles shall be unraveled, mysteries made plain, dark texts enlightened, hard providences made to appear wise. The least soul in heaven knows more of God than the greatest saint on earth! The greatest saint on earth may have it said of him, “Nevertheless, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” Not our mightiest divines understand so much of theology as the lambs of the flock of glory! Not the greatest masterminds of earth understand the millionth part of the mighty meanings which have been discovered by souls emancipated from clay. Yes, broth-

ers and sisters, "To die is gain." Take away, take away that hearse! Remove that shroud! Come, put white plumes upon the horse's heads, and let gilded trappings hang around them! There, take away that fife, that shrill sounding music of the death march. Lend me the trumpet and the drum. O hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah! Why weep we the saints to heaven? Why do we need to lament? They are not dead, they are gone ahead! Stop, stop that mourning, refrain your tears, clap your hands, clap your hands!—

***"They are supremely blessed,
Have done with care and sin and woe—
And with their Savior rest."***

What? Weep? Weep for heads that are crowned with garlands of heaven? Weep? Weep for hands that grasp the harps of gold? What? Weep for eyes that see the Redeemer? What? Weep for hearts that are washed from sin and are throbbing with eternal bliss! What? Weep for men who are in the Savior's bosom? No! Weep for yourselves, that you are *here*. Weep that the mandate has not come which bids *you* to die! Weep that you must tarry, but weep not for them! I see them turning back on you with loving wonder, and they exclaim, "Why do you weep?" What? Weep for poverty that it is clothed in riches? Weep for sickness, that it has inherited eternal health? What? Weep for shame, that it is glorified? And weep for sinful mortality, that it has become immaculate? Oh, weep not, but rejoice! "If you knew what it was that I have said unto you and where I have gone, you would rejoice with a joy that no man should take from you." "To die is gain." Ah, this makes the Christian long to die! It makes him say—

***"Oh, that the word were given!
O Lord of Hosts, the wave divide,
And land us all in heaven!"***

And now, friends, does this belong to you all? Can you claim an interest in it? Are you living to Christ? Does Christ live in you? For if not, your death will *not* be gain. Are you a believer in the Savior? Has your heart been renewed and your conscience washed in the blood of Jesus? If not, my Hearer, I do truly weep for you. I will save my tears for lost friends. There, with this handkerchief I'd staunch my eyes forever for my beloved who shall die, if those tears could save you. O, when you die, what a day! If the world were hung in sackcloth, it could not express the grief that you would feel. You *die*. O death! O death! How hideous are you to men who are not in Christ! And yet, my hearer, you shall soon die. Save me your bed of shrieks, your look of gall, your words of bitterness! Oh that you could be saved from the dread hereafter! Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come! Who is he that can preach

of it? Horrors strike the guilty soul! It quivers upon the verge of death—no, on the verge of hell! It looks over, clutching hard to life and it hears there the sullen groans, the hollow moans and shrieks of tortured ghosts which come up from the pit of hell that is bottomless and it clutches firmly to life, clasps the physician and bids him hold on lest he should fall into the pit that burns! And the spirit looks down and sees all the fiends of everlasting punishments and back it recoils. But die it must. It would barter all it has to gain an hour. But no, the fiend has got its grip and down it must plunge! And who can tell the hideous shriek of a lost soul? It cannot reach heaven. But if it could, it might well be imagined that it would suspend the melodies of angels—it might make even God's redeemed weep if they could hear the wailings of a damned soul! Ah, you men and women, you have wept. But if you die unregenerate, there will be no weeping like that—there will be no shrieks like that—no wails like that! May God spare us from ever hearing it or uttering it ourselves! Oh, how the grim caverns of hades startle, and how the darkness of night is frightful when the wail of a lost soul comes up from the ascending flames—while it is descending in the pit. “Turn you, turn you. Why will you die, O house of Israel?” Christ is preached to you. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Believe on Him and live, you guilty, vile, perishing! Believe and live!

But know this, that if you reject my message, and despise my Master—in that day when He shall judge the world in righteousness by that man, Jesus Christ, I must be a swift witness against you! I have told you—at your soul's peril reject it! Receive my message and you are saved. Reject it—take the responsibility on your own head. Behold, my garments are clear of your blood; if you are damned, it is not for lack of warning. Oh God grant you may not perish!

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THE SOUND IN THE MULBERRY TREES

NO. 147

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 31, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the Lord go out before you, to smite the host of the Philistines.”
2 Samuel 5:24.

DAVID had just fought the Philistines in this very valley and gained a signal victory, so that he said, “The Lord has broken forth upon my enemies before me as the breach of waters.” The Philistines had come up in great hosts and had brought their gods with them, that like Israel, when the Ark of the Lord was brought into their midst, they might feel quite sure of victory. However, by the help of God, David easily put them to rout, burned their images in the fire and obtained a glorious victory over them. Note, however, that when they came a second time against David, David did not go up to fight them without inquiring of the Lord. Once he had been victorious, he might have said, as many of us have said, in fact, in other cases—“I shall be victorious again. I may rest quite sure that if I have triumphed once, I shall triumph yet again. Why should I go and seek at the Lord’s hands?” Not so, David! He had gained one victory by the strength of the Lord. He would not venture upon another until he had ensured the same. He went and asked the sacred oracle, “Shall I go up against them?” And when he was informed that he was not immediately to march against them but to encamp so as to surprise them at the mulberry trees, he did not object a single moment to the mandate of God. And when he was bid to wait until he should hear the sound in the tops of the mulberry trees before he went to fight, he was not in an ill haste to rush to battle at once but he tarried until the mulberry trees began to sing at the top by reason of the wind that rushed along the leaves. He would wait until God’s sign was given. He said, “I will not lift my spear nor my hand till God has bid me do it, lest I should go to war at my own charges and lose all I have obtained.”

My brothers and sisters let us learn from David to take no steps without God! The last time you moved, or went into another business, or changed your situation in life, you asked God’s help and then did it and you were blessed in the doing of it. You have been up to this time a suc-

cessful man. You have always sought God, but do not think that the stream of providence necessarily runs in a continuous current! Remember, *tomorrow* you may, without seeking God's advice, venture upon a step which you will regret but once and that will be until you die. You have been wise up to now—it may be because you have trusted in the Lord with all your heart and have not leaned to your own understanding. You have said like David, "Let us inquire of the Lord," and like Jehoshaphat, who said to Ahab, "I will not go up until I have inquired of the Lord." And you have not to ask priests of Baal, but you have said, "Is there not here one prophet of the Lord, that I may inquire at his hands?" Now, keep on in the same way—do not, I beseech you, go before the cloud! If providence tarries, tarry till providence comes—never go before it! He goes on a fool's errand who goes before God—but he walks in a blessed path who sees the footsteps of providence and reads the map of Scripture and so discovers, "This is the way wherein I am to walk." This may be imputed to someone here. I thought I would begin with it, for it may be I have some young man here who is unadvisedly about to take a step which may be his ruin, temporarily. I beseech him, if he loves the Lord—I speak to none but those who are already Christians—I beseech him not to venture until he has sought counsel of God and unless he has a firm conviction that he is doing it not merely for his own advantage but to help him in better serving his God! Unless he can be sure that he has God's approval of his steps let me—by the mistake that many have made, by the mischief that he will do himself unless he listens to me—let me beseech him to stop and not take so much as one half a step, or lift his foot until he has sought of God and has had the answer, "Go up against them."

Thus I have introduced the text—but now I would refer to it in another way altogether. David was not to go to battle until he heard a sound of a rustling in the tops of the mulberry trees. There was a calm, perhaps. And God's order to David was, "You are not to begin to fight until the wind begins rustling through the tops of the mulberry trees." Or as the Rabbis have it—and it is a very pretty concept if it is true—"The footsteps of angels walking along the tops of the mulberry trees" make them rustle. That was the sign for them to fight—when God's cherubim were going with them—when they should come who can walk through the clouds and fly through the air, led by the great Captain, Himself, walking along the mulberry trees and so make a rustle by their celestial footsteps! How true that may be, I cannot tell. My remark is only this—that there are certain signs which ought to be indications to us of certain duties. I shall use the verse in this way. First, *there are certain special duties which are not duties to everybody but only to some people.* If we wish to know

whether we are to perform these duties, we must seek signs concerning them and not go and rush into a duty to which we are not called unless we get a sign, even as David got the rustling among the mulberry leaves. And then I should use it, in the second place, thus—*there are certain duties which are common to all of us*. But when we see some sign of God's Holy Spirit being in motion, or some other signs, *these are seasons when we ought to be more than ever active* and more than ever earnest in the service of our Master!

I. First, then, in regard to SPECIAL DUTIES. I shall confine myself, I think, to one. The office of the ministry is a special duty. I do not believe, as some do, that it is the business of all of us to preach. I believe it is the business of a great many people who do preach to hold their tongues. I think that if they had waited until God had sent them, they would have been at home right now. And there are some men who are not fit to edify a doorpost who yet think that if they could but once enter the pulpit they would attract a multitude! They conceive preaching to be just the easiest thing in the entire world and while they have not power to speak three words correctly and have not any instruction from on high and never were intended for the pulpit, for the mere sake of the honor or the salary, they rush into the ministry! There are hundreds of men in the ministry starving for lack of bread and entirely unsuccessful—and I believe in regard to some of them that the best thing they could do would be to open a grocery shop. They would be doing more to serve God and to serve the church if they would take a business and preach now and then as they had time to study, or else give it up altogether and let somebody come and preach to the people who had something to tell them. For alas, alas, a preacher who has nothing to say will not only do no good but will do a great deal of harm! The people who hear him get disgusted at the very name of a place of worship—and they only look at it as a kind of stocks where they are to sit for an hour with their feet fast, quiet and still, listening to a man who is saying nothing because he has nothing to say! I would not advise all of you to be preachers! I do not believe God ever intended that you should. If God had intended all His people to be preachers, I wonder how even He in His wisdom could have found them all congregations! If all were preachers, who would be the hearers? No, I believe the office of the ministry, though not like that of the priesthood, as to any particular sanctity, or any particular power that we possess, is yet like the priesthood in this—that no man ought to take it to himself unless he is *called* “hereunto,” as was Aaron. No man has any right to address a congregation on spiritual things unless he believes that God has given him a special calling to the work and unless he has also, in due time, received certain seals which attest his ministry as being the ministry of

God. The rightly ordained minister is ordained not by the laying on of bishop's or presbyter's hands but by the Spirit of God, Himself, whereby the power of God is communicated in the preaching of the word.

There may be some here who will say, "How am I to know whether I am called to preach?" My brothers, I dare say you will find it out, by-and-by. And if you are sincerely desirous to know when you are in the path of duty in endeavoring to preach, I must bid you do as David did—he noted the rustling in the leaves of the mulberry trees. And I must have you notice certain signs. Do you want to know whether you can preach? Ask yourself this question, "Can I pray? When I have been called upon in the prayer meeting, have I been enabled to put my words together and has God helped me in the matter?" So far so good. "Well, then, I will go and try. I will preach in the street, for instance." Suppose nobody listens to me? Suppose I go and take a room, or go to a chapel and nobody comes to hear? Well, there is no rustling among the mulberry trees! I had better stop. Suppose I go to my wife and children and take a text and just preach a little wee bit to them and to the neighbors. Suppose, after I have preached to them, I should feel that they could preach a great deal better to me? There is no rustling among the mulberry trees and I had better give it up! And suppose if, after having preached for some time, I hear of none who have been brought to Christ? There is no rustling among the mulberry trees—I think the best thing I could do is to let somebody else try. Then probably I have not been called to the ministry and it would have been a fearful thing for me to have occupied the watchman's place without having received the watchman's commission! He that should take upon himself to be a policeman and go and do the work of arresting others, without having received a commission, must be in danger of being taken up, himself, for being a deceiver! And it may be, if I had not been called to the ministry and had no seal of it, I had better leave it alone, lest I go without God's commission and that would never answer my purpose—to begin without His having sent me—for if He has not sent me, it may be I shall break down in my errand and do no good. I do not ask whether you are much instructed or learned or all that. I do not need to ask you; for I do not care about it, myself. But I ask you these questions. Have you tried to address a Sunday school? Have you gained the attention of the children? Having tried to address a few people when they have been gathered together—have you found they would listen to you after you had preached? Had you any evidence and any sign that would lead you to believe that souls were blessed under you? Did any of the saints of God who were spiritually-minded tell you that their souls were fed by your sermon? Did you hear of any sinner convicted of sin? Have you any reason to believe that you have had a soul converted under you?

If not, if you will take one's advice for what it is good for—and I believe it is advice which God's Holy Spirit would have me give you—you had better give it up! You will make a very respectable Sunday school teacher. You will do very well in a great many other ways. But unless these things have been known by you—unless you have these evidences—you may say you have been called and all that, but I don't believe it. If you had been called to preach, there would have been some evidence and some sign of it.

I remember, two years ago, some man wrote me a note telling me that it had been said to his heart and God the Holy Spirit had revealed it to him that I was to let him preach in this chapel. Well, I just wrote to him and told him that was a one-sided revelation, and that as soon as ever God revealed it to *me*, that I was to let him preach here, then he would! But until then, I did not see that the revelation was quite a square one. Why should it be revealed to *him* and not revealed to *me*? I have heard no more of him and I have not had it revealed to me either—so that I do not suppose he will make his appearance here. I say this because, though to a great many of you it would be nothing at all, there are a large number of young men here who preach. I thank God for them—for *anyone* who is able to preach! But I will thank God to stop those who cannot preach because if they go about to preach and have not the ability and God has not sent them, they will just make fools of themselves—though *that* you should not be greatly surprised at—because they may not be far off already. But they will make the very gospel, itself, come into contempt! If they profess to preach who have not the call from God's Spirit, when they begin to talk they will just bring more scandal upon the cross by a rash defense of it than would have come if they had left it alone! Now, take care about that. I would discourage none. I would say to every young man who has a grain of ability and believes he has been called of God and everyone who has really been blessed, "So far as I can help you, I will help you. I will do so to the very uttermost if you need my help and I pray God Almighty to bless you and make you more and more abundantly useful. For the church needs many pastors and evangelists." But if there is no soul converted under you; if you are not qualified to preach at all; you shall have my equally earnest prayers for you that God may speed you—and I shall pray for you in this way, that God will speed you by making you hold your tongue! I waited till I heard the sound among the mulberry trees, else had I been uncalled and unsent. David waited. He would not go to the battle till he had heard the signal from on high—which was the signal for the battle and the signal of the commencement of warfare.

II. But now, my brothers I come to something more practical to many of you. You do not profess to be called to preach—THERE ARE CERTAIN DUTIES BELONGING TO ALL CHRISTIANS WHICH ARE TO BE ESPECIALLY PRACTICED AT SPECIAL SEASONS. First, concerning *the Christian church at large*. The whole of the Christian church should be very prayerful, always seeking the unction of the Holy One to rest upon their hearts so that the kingdom of Christ may come and that His will be done on earth even as it is in heaven. There are times when God seems to favor Zion; when there are great movements made in the church; when revivals are commenced; when men are raised up whom God blesses. That ought to be to you like “a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.” We ought *then* to be *doubly* prayerful, *doubly* earnest, wrestling more at the throne of God than we have been likely to do! I think this is just the time that demands your extraordinary and special prayers. I look upon that great movement in the Church of England, the preaching on Sabbath evenings in Exeter Hall, as a sign of rustling—a kind of “a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.” My brothers, I could pity the man who would be for one moment envious, though a thousand such places should be full to the doors! I could cry out to God for mercy on the man who could be so great a sinner against humanity and against the souls of men as to wish that it should not prosper! With all my heart I pray that God may bless it and I exhort you just now—as there appears to be a move in the right direction now that some of the ministers are more thoroughly awakened than they used to be; now that the ordinance of preaching is more honored and now that there is a spirit of hearing poured out among the people—I beseech you, let your prayers be *doubly* earnest! Do as David was commanded to do—rise up and bestir yourself, not in a spirit of envy, not in a spirit of strife—do not bestir yourself lest the Church of England shall beat Dissenters! No, brethren, let us each bestir ourselves that we may beat the *devil*! Let us each be earnest and let us each, when we see a movement in any section of the church, hold up the hands of faithful men and pray to God that if they are not faithful men they may be made right—but that as far as they are right they may have a blessing! I think the church of Christ has lived to a glorious period. I really think the day to which we have lived is a day that ought to gladden the eyes of many of God’s people! So far from being now, as I was a little time ago, in a gloomy frame about the worshippers of the church, I seem to think I have lived now to a happy era!

Even the holy Whitefield, himself, never stirred up such a revival of religion as God has been pleased to give now! Not by his preaching did he stir up a host of bishops and clergymen to come forth and preach to the poor! God has been pleased of late to wake up the churches far and near!

I hear the noise among the mulberry trees! Everywhere I hear of the doctrines of grace being made more prominent and the preaching of the gospel becoming more earnest, more energetic and fuller of the Spirit! We have seen in our midst some called out of our own church that God has blessed in the preaching of the Word. There are in many places and I allude especially to the Church of England just now, “the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.” Now, my brothers and sisters, is the time for us to bestir ourselves! Oh let us cry to God more earnestly! Let our prayer meetings be filled with men who come full of vehement petitions. Let our private altars be more constantly kept burning, causing the smoke of prayer to ascend and let our closets continually be occupied by earnest intercession! Bestir yourself—there is a “sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.”

That is concerning the church at large and the same truth holds good of *any particular congregation*. One Sabbath-day the minister preached with great unction. God clothed him with power—he seemed like John the Baptist in the wilderness, crying, “Repent you, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” He spoke with all the earnestness of a man who was about to die. He so spoke that the people trembled—a visible thrill passed through the audience. Every eye was fixed and the tears seemed to bedew every cheek. Men and women rose up from the sermon, saying, “Surely, God was in this place, and we have felt His presence.” What ought a Christian to say, as he retires from the House of God? He should say, “I have heard this day the sound of the leaves of the mulberry trees.” I saw the people earnest. I marked the minister speaking mightily, God having touched his lips with a live coal from off the altar. I saw the tears in every eye. I saw the deep, wrapped attention of many who were careless. There were some young people there that looked as if they had been impressed—their countenances seemed to show that there was a work going on. Now, what should I do? The first thing I will do is I will bestir myself! But how shall I do it? Why, I will go home this day and I will wrestle in prayer more earnestly than I have been likely to do, that God will bless the minister and multiply the church! Well, what next? Where do I sit? Was there a young woman in my pew that seemed impressed? When I go this evening I will look out for her. I have heard the “sound of the leaves of the mulberry trees,” and I will bestir myself. And if I see her there, I will speak a word to her, or, what is more, if I hear another sermon like it and I see any who seem to be impressed, I will try to find them out, for I know that two words from a private person are often better than 50 from a minister! So that if I have seen a young man impressed, I will touch him on his elbow and say, “You seemed as if you enjoyed this sermon.” “Yes, I liked it very well.” “And do you like spiritual

things?” Who can tell? I may be made the means of his conversion! At all events, I shall have this sweet consolation to go to bed with—I heard the “sound of the leaves of the mulberry trees,” and as soon as I heard it, I bestirred myself that I might serve my God and be the means of winning souls from hell! But, alas, my brothers and sisters, much of the seed we sow seems to be lost for lack of watering! Many an impressive sermon seems to lose much of its force because it is not followed up as it should be. God’s purposes, I know, are answered. His word does not return unto Him void. Still, I think we might sometimes ask ourselves, have we not been too tardy, too neglectful in not availing ourselves of favorable times and seasons when the power of the Spirit has been in our midst and when we should have looked upon it as the signal for more strenuously exerting ourselves in the service of our Master?

The same I might say of any time of general sickness, or any time of plague or cholera, or sudden death. There are times when the cholera is raging through our streets. The people are all trembling, they are afraid to die. Mark; that is the “sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.” It is the business of you and me to bestir ourselves when people are by any means led to serious thought—when God is walking through the land and smiting down first one and then another and the minds of the people are all on tiptoe concerning what the end shall be. When there has been some alarming fire; when a sudden death has taken place in the street, or in the court, or in a house, it is the Christian’s business to seize upon the time and to improve it for his Master! “Now,” said the Puritans, during the great plague of London, when the hiring parish priests had fled from their churches—“Now is our time to preach!” And all through that terrible time when the carts, filled with the dead, went through the streets overgrown with grass, these strong-minded Puritans occupied the pulpits, and boldly preached the Word of God! Brothers, that is what we should do whenever we see a time more favorable than another for telling sinners of the wrath to come! Let us seize it, just as the merchant looks out for every turn of the market, for every rise and every fall—and just as the farmer looks out for a good season for sowing or planting or mowing. Let us look out for the best times for seeking to do good! Let us plow deep while sluggards sleep and let us labor as much as possible in the best season to make hay while the sun is shining and serve our God when we hear the “sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.”

And now permit me to go back to a thought I have given you. Keep the same idea in view in regard to *every individual* you meet with. If you have a drunken neighbor, it is very seldom you can ever say a word to him. His wife is ill. She is sick and dying—poor fellow—he is sober this time.

He seems to be a bit impressed. He is anxious about his wife and anxious about himself. Now is your time! Now for the good word—put it in well, now is your opportunity! There is a great swearer but he seems, by some terrible providence or other, to become a little abashed and he is not so profane as he used to be. You should do as the ancient slingers did. If they saw a warrior lift his helmet, in they would put the stone before he could get the helmet down again! So if you see a man a little impressed and he is open to conviction, do what you can, as God gives you opportunity! And if any of your acquaintance have been in the House of God, if you have induced them to go there and you think there is some little good doing but you do not know, take care of that little—it may be God has used us as a foster mother to bring up His child, so that this little one may be brought up in the faith and this newly converted soul may be strengthened and edified! But I'll tell you—many of you Christians do a deal of mischief by what you say when going home. A man once said that when he was a lad he heard a certain sermon from a minister and felt deeply impressed under it. Tears stole down his cheeks and he thought within himself, "I will go home to pray." On the road home he fell into the company of two members of the church. One of them began saying, "Well, how did you enjoy the sermon? The other said, "I do not think he was quite sound on such a point." "Well," said the other, "I thought he was rather off his guard," or something of that sort. "And one pulled one part of the minister's sermon to pieces, and another the other, until," said the young man, "before I had gone many yards with them, I had forgotten all about it! And all the good I thought I had received seemed swept away by these two men who seemed afraid lest I should get any hope, for they were just pulling that sermon to pieces that would have brought me on my knees." How often have we done the same! People will say, "What did you think of that sermon?" I gently tell them nothing at all, and if there is any fault in it—and very likely there is, it is better not to speak of it, for some may get good from it. I do believe that many a sermon that seems nothing but perfect nonsense from beginning to end may be the means of salvation! You and I may have more knowledge of the Scriptures. We may be more instructed and enlightened—we may say, "Dear me, I do not know how people can hear that." You may think people are not able to hear it, but they are saved. That is all you have to look after. A primitive minister has sometimes quite puzzled you—you have said, "I dare say the good man understands himself, but I do not understand him." And yet he has got all those people with their attention fixed! And you have seen souls brought to God under the sermon, and therefore, you must not say anything about it! You are obliged to say, "Well, it was not the sermon for me." Never mind that, it was the sermon

for someone else! It is the best way for you not to hear that man again, but let him go on. He will get some people to do good to, I dare say.

I just throw this in, in an interjectory way. If you have got hold of people's ears, or a bit of their ear—if you have got them to say, "I think I will come again," do not put in any word that may keep them away! But bestir yourselves, to be the means of saving souls instrumentally when you hear these signals from on high.

And I think, my brothers and sisters, I must expressly make an appeal to you in regard to *your own children*. There are certain times in the history of my own beloved children when they seem more impressible than at other seasons. I beseech you never lose the opportunity! Salvation is of God, from first to last. But yet it is your business to use all the means just as if *you* could save them! Now there are times when your son, who is generally very merry and wild, comes home from chapel and there is a sort of solemnity about him you do not often see. When you see that, get a word with him. Sometimes your little daughter comes home. She has heard something she understands, something that seems to have struck her thoughts. Do not laugh at her; do not despise that little beginning! Who can tell? It may be the "sound in the tops of the mulberry trees." Your son, a boy of 14 or fifteen, is often coming home apparently deeply interested and sometimes you have thought, "Well, I don't know, the boy seems as if he listened rather more than others do. I think there must be a good work in him." Do not, by any harshness of yours, put a rough hand on that tender plant! Do not say to him, for instance, if he commits a little fault, "I thought there was some good thing in you but there is no piety in you at all, or else you would not have done it." Do *not* say that—that is a damper at once! Remember, if he is a child of God, he has his faults as well as any other boy. Therefore do not be too harsh or severe with him, but if you find the slightest good, say, there is the "sound in the tops of the mulberry trees." There may be ever such a faint rustling, never mind—that is my opportunity! Now will I be more earnest about my child's salvation and now will I seek to teach him, if I can, more fully the way of God! I will try to get him alone and talk to him. The tender plant, if it is of God, is sure to grow. But let me take care to be the instrument of fostering it and let me take my boy aside and say to him, "Well, my son, have you learned something of the evil of sin?" And if he says yes, and I find he has a little hope and faith, though it may be rather a superficial work, let me not despise it, but let me remember I was once grace in the blade, and though grace in the ear now, I would never have been grace in the ear if I had not been grace in the blade! I must not despise the blades because they are not ears! I must not kill the lambs because they are not sheep—for where would my sheep come from if I killed all

the lambs? I must not despise the weakest of the saints—for where should I get the advanced saints from if I put weak ones out of the Covenant and tell them they are not the children of God? No, I will watch for the least indication, the least sign of any good thing towards the Lord God of Israel and I will pray God that these signs may not be delusive, not like the smoke that is driven away, nor like the early cloud and the morning dew, but the abiding signs of divine grace begun which shall afterwards be grace complete!

And lastly, not to detain you longer, Christian, in regard to yourself there is a great truth of God here. There are times, you know, “when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.” You have a peculiar power in prayer. The Spirit of God gives you joy and gladness. The Scripture is open to you. The promises are applied. You walk in the light of God’s countenance and His candle shines about your head. You have peculiar freedom and liberty in devotion; perhaps you have got less to attend to in the world, and more closeness of communion with Christ than you used to have. Now is the time! Now, when you hear the “sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees”; now is the time to bestir yourselves! Now is the time to get rid of any evil habit that still remains! Now is the season in which God the Spirit is with you! Spread your sail, and remember what you sometimes sing—

“I can only spread the sail.

You, Lord, must breathe the auspicious gale.”

Be sure you have the sail up! Do not miss the gale for lack of preparation for it. Seek help of God that you may be more earnest in *duty*, when made more strong in *faith*—that you may be more constant in *prayer* when you have more liberty at the throne—that you may be more holy in your *conversation* while you live more closely with Christ!

And oh, with regard to some here, who tonight, or this morning, or at any other time have been led to think, “Oh, that I might be saved!” If you have any thought about it, any serious impression, I pray that God the Holy Spirit may enable you to look upon the impression that is made upon you as the “sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees!” I pray that you may be led to bestir yourselves and seek God more earnestly. If God the Spirit has convicted you in any degree; if He has impressed you; if He has made you tremble; if He has sent you home to pray—now, I beseech you—be in earnest about your own soul! And if God has awakened you so far, look upon that as a token of His grace and say, “Now or never.” It may be that this big wave will help you over the great bar that is before the harbor’s mouth. This may be the tide, which taken at the flood, leads on to heaven! Oh, that God might help you to take it at the flood, that you might be carried safely over your convictions, and your troubles, and landed safely in the blessed haven of faith—that haven

which is protected by the atonement of Christ, and by the bar of everlasting love! God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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NO. 148

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 18, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them
who fear God, who fear before Him.”
Ecclesiastes 8:12.*

I HAVE heard it sometimes said by wicked men, when they would arraign the justice of the Most High, that it is unjust that God should condemn men for the use of the powers which He, Himself, has given them. This most subtle evil has often grieved the hearts of those who are weak and ignorant and have not seen its untruthfulness—for to speak plainly of it, it is a gross lie! God does *not* condemn men for the *use* of the powers He has given them. He condemns them for the *misuse* of those powers! Not for employing them but for employing them as they ought not to employ them. Not for thinking, not for speaking, not for doing, but for thinking, speaking and doing, *contrary* to His law! God damns no man for the use of the powers which He has given him—let that be again repeated! But He does condemn them for the *abuse* of those powers and for their impudence in daring to turn those powers—which He has given them for His honor—against His service and against His throne. Now, my friends, there is no power which God has given us which may not be employed for God. I believe that David uttered a great friend, as well as a great exhortation to himself when he said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless His holy name.” There is nothing in man that God has not put there which may not be employed in God’s service. Some may ask me whether anger can be brought in. I answer, yes. A good man may serve God by being angry against sin. And to be angry against sin is a high and holy thing. You may ask me, perhaps, whether ridicule can be employed. I answer, yes. I believe we may even rightly employ it in the preaching of God’s Word. I know this—I always intend to use it. And if by a laugh I can make men see the folly of an error better than in any other way, they shall laugh and laugh here, too, for ridicule is to be used in God’s service. And every power that God has implanted in man—I will make no exception—may be used for God’s service and for God’s honor. What man has gotten for himself by the fall cannot be employed to serve God—we cannot bring before God Adam’s robbery to be a sacrifice to the Almighty. Nor can our own carnal and sinful passions honor the Most High. But there are natural powers which God has con-

ferred and none of these are in themselves sinful. I would have them, therefore, employed for the Master. Yes, even those powers with which it seems impossible to worship, such as the powers of assimilation, eating and drinking, may be brought to honor God; for what says the apostle?—"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Jesus Christ."

Now, you will notice that *fear* may be yoked into the service of God. True fear, not fearing, but believing, saves the soul; not doubt, but confidence is the strength and the deliverance of the Christian. Still, fear, as being one of those powers which God has given us, is not in itself sinful. Fear may be used for the most sinful purposes—at the same time it may be so ennobled by divine grace and so used for the service of God that it may become the grandest part of man. In fact, Scripture has honored fear, for the whole of piety is comprehended in these words, "Fear God." "The fear of the Lord." "Them who fear Him." These phrases are employed to express true piety and the men who possess it. But fear, I have said, may ruin the soul, alas, it has ruined multitudes! O Fear, you are the rock upon which many a ship has been wrecked! many a soul has suffered spiritual destruction through you, but then it has been not the fear of God but the fear of *man!* many have rushed against the thick points of the Almighty's shield and defied God in order to escape the wrath of feeble man. many, through fear of worldly loss, have brought great guilt into their consciences. Some, through fear of ridicule and laughter, have not had the boldness to follow the right and so have gone astray and been ruined. Yes, and where fear does not work utter destruction, it is capable of doing much damage to the spirit. Fear has paralyzed the arm of the most gigantic Christian, stopped him in his race and impeded him in his labors. Faith can do anything—but fear, sinful fear—can do nothing at all but prevent faith from performing its labors! Fear has made the Christian sorrow, both by night and day. A cankering fear lest his needs should not be provided and his necessities supplied has driven the Christian to unworthy thoughts. And distrustful, doubting fear has made him dishonor God and prevented his sucking the honey out of the promises. Fear has kept many a child of God from doing his duty, from making a bold profession. Fear has brought bondage into his spirit. Fear misused, you are the Christian's greatest curse and you are the sinner's ruin! You are a sly serpent, creeping among the thorns of sin and when you are allowed to twist yourself around manhood, you crush it in your folds and poison it with your venom. Nothing can be worse than this sinful fear! It has slaughtered its myriads and sent thousands to hell! But yet it may seem a paradox—fear, when rightly employed, is the very brightest state of Christianity and is used to express all piety comprehended in one emotion! "The fear of God" is the constant description which the Scripture gives of true religion!

And now, beloved, I shall want you this morning to have some little patience with me while I try to go after certain fearing souls whose fear is of the right kind, even a fear which renders salvation but who through it are now suffering some degree of torment and are wishing to be delivered from it. An old Puritan says, "Jesus Christ would shake hands with a man that had the palsy." I must try and do the same this morning. Some of you have the palsy of fear. I want to come after you and say to you, "Fear not." I want to bid you to be of good cheer because God would comfort you. There are five different kinds of fear that persons are laboring under which I would now endeavor to address.

I. There is, first, THE FEAR CAUSED BY AN AWAKENING CONSCIENCE. This is the lowest grade of godly fear. From here all true piety takes its rise. By nature the sinner does not dread the wrath of God. He thinks sin a little thing. He looks upon its pleasures and forgets its penalties. He dares the Almighty to the war and lifts his puny arm against the Eternal! No sooner, however, is he awakened by God's Spirit than fear takes possession of his heart—the arrows of the Almighty drink up his spirit and the thunders of the law roll in his ears! He feels his life to be uncertain and his body frail. He dreads death because he knows that death would be to him the prelude of destruction. He dreads life, for life, itself, is intolerable when the wrath of God is poured out into his soul! many of you who are now before me have passed through that dreadful ordeal of suffering under a sense of the wrath of God. We, my brothers and sisters, shall never forget, to our dying day, that hour of desperate grief when first we discovered our lost estate. By the preaching of the Word, by the reading of the Scriptures, by prayer, or by some Providence, we were led to look within. We discovered the evil of our hearts and we heard how terribly God would punish the transgressor. Do you not remember how we started from our beds in the morning, having slept uneasily and bowed our knees in prayer and prayed until the hot sweat ran down our brow? But did we not rise without a hope that we had been heard? Do you not recollect how, in our business, we were sometimes so absent in mind that those who were round about us thought that we must have been bereaved of our wits? Do you not well recollect how the best dainties of our meals seemed to have the bitterness of wormwood in them and the sweetest draughts were mingled with gall? Do you remember how all day long we sorrowed and went to our bed at night with another prayer, still as full of agony and still as hopeless? And by night we could not sleep but dreamed of the wrath to come, saw dreams more horrible than we had dreamed before? Each night and day the wrath of God seemed to increase and our pangs and agonies became more terrible! Oh, we shall never forget it—those of us who have passed through the same will never let that era be forgotten, for the time of its beginning was the time of our conversion and the time of its end was the time of our salva-

tion! Have I any here who are in this same state this morning? I am coming after you and in coming after you I proclaim the words of my text, "Surely I know that it shall be well with them who fear God, who fear before Him." sinner, it shall be well with you if you are now made to fear the wrath of God on account of your sin! If God the Spirit has poured forth the vials of Almighty wrath into your soul so that you are cast down and sorely vexed, think not you shall be destroyed—it shall be well with you! Let me comfort you now, while you are suffering these things. Remember that what you suffer is that which all God's people have had to suffer in a measure. many poor hearts come to me when I am sitting to see the anxious ones and at other times and they tell me they are in such deep distress. They think surely never anyone felt as they feel! And when I begin to unfold to them the experience of all saints and tell them how it is a well-trod path which almost every traveler to heaven has had to tread, they stand astonished and think it cannot be so! I tell you, sinner, that your deepest woes have been felt by someone even more keenly than you feel them now! You say, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing." Why, man, there have been some who have sunk far deeper than you have sunk! You are up to your ankles. I have known some to have been up to the loins and there have been some who have been covered over their very heads so that they could say, "All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me." Your distresses are very painful, but they are not singular—others have had to endure the same! Be comforted—it is not a desert island—others have been there, too! And if they have passed through this and won the crown, you shall pass through it, by God's grace, and yet inherit the glory of the believer on the breast of Christ.

But I will tell you something else to comfort you. I will put this question to you—Would you wish to go back and become what you once were? Your sins are now so painful that you can scarcely eat, or drink, or sleep. There was a time when your sins never haunted you, when you could drink and play with Satan and with sin as merrily as anyone. Come, would you like to be as you were then? "No," I hear you say, "no, my Master, my God, grieve me more if it so pleases You, but do not let me be hardened anymore." Ask the poor stricken conscience, in the first agonies and throes of his grief, whether he would like to be a hardened sinner. "No," he says. And when he hears the blasphemer swear against God, the tears are in his eyes. He says, "Lord, I thank You for my miseries if they deliver me from hardness of heart. I can extol You for my agonies if they save me from such dire presumption, such rebellion against You." Well, then, be of good cheer! Your condition, you see, is not the worst of all. There is yet a worse state. Oh, if you have come so far, hope in the name of Christ you shall come yet further! But the great consolation is this—Jesus Christ died for you. If God the Holy Spirit has shown you that you are dead in sin and if He has revealed to you the desperate

character of your iniquity and broken you in pieces with penitence on account of your guilt—hear me, I speak not now haphazardly, I speak with God’s authority—Jesus Christ died for you! Yes, for *you*, vilest of the vile! I am no general redemptionist—I believe Jesus Christ died for only as many as will be saved—He died only for His elect! I do not believe He died in vain for any man alive; I have always believed that Christ was punished instead of men. Now, if He were punished in the place of *all* men, I could see no justice in God punishing men again after having punished Christ for them! I hold and believe—and I think on Scriptural authority—that Jesus Christ died for all those who believe or will believe. And He was punished in the place of all those who feel their need of a Savior and lay hold on Him. The rest reject Him, despise Him, sin against God and are punished for their sins. But those who are redeemed, having been blood-bought, shall not be lost! Christ’s blood is too precious to have been shed for men who are damned! It is too awful a thing to think of the Savior standing in a sinner’s place and then that sinner, after all, having to bear his own iniquities! I can never indulge a thought which appears to be so unrighteous to God and so unsafe to men. All who the Savior bought, He shall have! All that His heavenly Father has given Him, He says shall come unto Him. Now here is something solid for you, poor soul. I ask again, do you know and feel yourself to be lost and ruined? Then the Savior bought you and will have you! Then He was punished for you and you will never be punished again. Then He hung upon the cross for you that you might not perish; for you there is no hell! So far as you are concerned, the eternal lake is quenched. The dungeons of hell are broken open; their bars are cut in sunder. You are free—no damnation can ever seize you—no devils can ever drag you to the pit of hell! You are redeemed and you are saved! “What?” you say, “I am redeemed? Why, sir, I am full of sin.” It is the very reason why you are redeemed! “But I feel myself to be the guiltiest of all the human race.” Yes, and that is just the evidence that Christ died for you! He, Himself, says, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” If you have got abundance of good works and think you can go to heaven by them, you will perish! But if you know your guilt and confess it—it is not my affirmation but the affirmation of the Scriptures—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom,” says the apostle, “I am chief.” Lay hold on that, poor soul—and then I repeat to you the text, “Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them who fear God, who fear before Him.” It shall yet be well with you—and black with sin though you are—you shall one day sing among the blood-washed ones in glory everlasting! That is the first stage of fearing God. We shall now proceed to another.

II. There are many who have believed and are truly converted, yet have a fear which I may call THE FEAR OF ANXIETY. They are afraid

that they are *not* converted. They are converted, there is no doubt of it. Sometimes they know they are so, themselves, but for the most part, they are afraid. There are some people in the world who have a preponderance of fear in their characters. It seems as if their mind, from its peculiar constitution, had a greater aptitude for the state of fear than for any other state. Why, even in temporal matters they are always fearing. And, when these poor souls get converted, they are always afraid that they are not so. First they will tell you they are afraid they never repented enough. The work in their hearts, they say, was not deep. It was just superficial plowing and never entered into their souls. Then they are quite sure they never came to Christ aright—they think they came the wrong way. How that can be no one knows, for they could not come at all except the Father drew them! And the Father did not draw them the wrong way! Still they hold that they did not come aright. Then if that idea is knocked on the head, they say they do not *believe* aright. But when that is got rid of, they say if they were converted, they would not be the subject of so much sin. They say they can trust Christ, but they are afraid they do not trust Him aright. And they always, do what you may, come back to the old condition. They are always afraid! And now, what shall I say to these good souls? Why, I will say this, “Surely I know that it shall be well with them who fear God, who fear before Him.” Not only those who *believe* but those who *fear*, have got a promise! I would to God that they had more faith. I would that they could lay hold on the Savior and had more assurance and even attain unto a perfect confidence. But if they cannot, shall I utter a word that would hurt them? God forbid! “Surely I know that it shall be well with them who fear God, who fear before Him.” There are some of these poor creatures who are the holiest and most heavenly-minded people in the entire world! I have seen men and women who, with poor, desponding spirits, have exhibited the loveliest graces. There has not been the blushing healthful beauty of the rose; but the lily has its beauties, sickly though it seems, and these, though they are faint and weak, have eminently the graces of humility and meekness, of patience and endurance—and they practice more of meditation, more of self-examination, more of repentance—more of prayer than any race of Christians alive! God forbid that I should vex their spirits—there are some of God’s best children who always grow in the shade of fear and can scarcely attain to say so much as, “I know whom I have believed.” Darkness suits them best—their eyes are weak and much sunlight seems to blind them—they love the shadows. And though they thought they could sing, “I know my Savior, I love Him, and He loves me,” they go back again and begin to groan in themselves, “Do I love the Lord? Indeed, if it is so, why am I thus?”

I am now about to utter a great paradox—I believe that some of these poor fearing people have got the greatest faith of anybody in the world! I

have sometimes thought that great fear, that great anxiety must have great faith with it to keep the soul alive at all. See that man drowning there—there is another in the water, too, I see. He in the distance thinks he can swim—a plank is thrown to him. He believes himself to be in no danger of sinking. He clutches the plank very leisurely and does not seem to grasp it firmly. But this poor creature here, he knows he cannot swim, he feels that he must soon sink. Now put the means of escape near him—how desperately he clutches it! How he seems as if he would drive his fingers through the plank! He clutches it for life or death, that is his all, for he must perish if he is not saved by that plank. Now in this case, he that fears the most, believes the most. And I do think it is so sometimes with poor desponding spirits. They have the greatest fear of hell and the greatest fear of themselves and the greatest dread that they are not right. Oh, what a faith they must have, when they are enabled to throw themselves on Christ, and when they can but whisper to themselves, “I think that He is mine”—“Surely I know that it shall be well with them who fear God, who fear before Him.”

But I want to comfort these poor souls a little more. I do not think a minister does well in killing the lambs, for where would be the sheep next year if he should do so? But at the same time it is his business to make the lambs grow into sheep if he can. And you who are fearing, I would not say a word to hurt you, but I would say a word to comfort you if I could! I would remind you that *you* are not fit to *judge* yourself. You have been just now examining yourself and you came to the conclusion that you really are not a child of God. Now, I hope you will not be offended with me, but I would not give one single farthing for your opinion of yourself! Why, I tell you, you have not any judgment! It was not long ago you were a base, presumptuous sinner—and then you thought yourself all right! I did not believe you then! Well, then you began to reform yourself. You practiced many good works and thought surely you were mending your pace to heaven then. Then I *knew* you were wrong! Now you are becoming a true believer in Christ, but you are very fearful and you say you are not safe. I *know* you *are*! You are not fit to judge! I should not like to see you elevated to the bench! You would scarcely know how to deal with other men, for you do not know how to deal with yourself! And who is he that *can* deal with himself? We sometimes think ourselves proud and we are never more humble than when we feel that we are proud. At other times we think ourselves to be wonderfully humble and we are never more proud than then! We sometimes say within ourselves, “Now I think I am overcoming my corruptions.” That is just the time when they are about to attack us most severely! At another time we are crying, “Surely I shall be cut off!” That is just the period when sin is being routed, because we are hating it the most and crying out the most against it! We are not qualified to judge ourselves—our poor scales are so

out of order that they will never tell the truth! Now, then, just give up your own judgment, except thus far—can you say that you “are a poor sinner, and nothing at all, and that Jesus Christ is your all-in-all?” Then be comforted! You have no right to be anxious. You have no reason to be so; you could not say *that* if you had not been converted! You must have been quickened by divine grace or else you would not be anxious at all! And you must have faith or else you would not be able even to lay hold of Christ so much as to know your own nothingness and His all-sufficiency. Poor soul, be comforted!

But shall I tell you one thing? Do you know the greatest of God’s people are often in the same condition as you are now? “No, no,” says the fearful soul, “I do not believe that! I believe that when persons are converted they never have any fear.” And they look at the minister and they say, “Oh but if I could be but like that minister—I know *he* never has doubts and fears! Oh, if I could be like old deacon So-and-So—such a holy man—how he prays! Oh, if I could feel like Mr. So-and-So who calls to visit me, and talks to me so sweetly. They never doubt.” Ah, that is because you do not know! Those whom you think to be the strongest and are so in public, have their times of the greatest weakness when they can scarcely know their own names in spiritual things! If one may speak for the rest, those of us who enjoy the greatest portions of assurance have times when we would give the entire world to know ourselves to be possessors of divine grace! There are times when we would be ready to sacrifice our lives if we might but have the shadow of a hope that we were in the love of Jesus Christ our Lord! Now, little one, if the giants go there, what wonder if the dwarfs must? What if God’s favorite and chosen ones—what if His valiant men, the bodyguard of Christ, those men whose swords are on their thighs, and who stand up for the friend, and are its champions—what if they sometimes are weak? And what wonder, then, if you should be weak? What if the heirs of salvation and the soldiers of the cross sometimes feel their knees feeble and their hands hang down and their hearts faint? What wonder, then, if you, who are less than the least of all saints should sometimes be in trouble, too? Oh, be of good cheer! Fear will never kill anybody. “Doubts and fears,” said an old preacher, “are like a toothache—nothing more painful but never fatal.” Fear will often grieve us, but it will never kill us. It may distress us much, but it will never burn the soul. Fears even do good at times. Let me not however, praise them too much. I heard a preacher say, the other day, that fear was a good housekeeper. I said, “So I have heard, but I do not believe it. She never will keep a full cupboard. She is a good doorkeeper; she can keep beggars and thieves away; she is a good housedog to guard us and protect us in the night, and warn us of dangers, lest we fall into them.” The fear of anxiety, then, is a good fear. Take this promise—“Surely I know that it shall be well with them who fear God, who fear before Him.”

III. And now, my brothers and sisters, in the next place there is A FEAR WHICH WORKS CAUTION. When we get a little further advanced in the Christian life, our present state is not so much a matter of anxiety as our future state. We believe that we shall never totally fall from divine grace. We hold it as a cardinal doctrine of our religion that by no means will God ever leave His people or allow them to perish. But we often think within ourselves, "I am afraid lest I should bring dishonor on the cause of Christ. I am afraid lest, in some moment of temptation, I shall be left to go astray. I am afraid lest I should lose that hallowed peace and that delightful joy which it has been my privilege to enjoy and shall yet go back into the world. God grant I may not prove to be a hypocrite, after all!" Now, I have hundreds of persons just now in this place who are feeling like this and I will tell you one ill effect of this fear. These persons say, "I dare not join the church because I am afraid I shall fall." A friend mentions to them that they hold it to be their duty, if they have believed, to make a profession of their faith in baptism. They say, "Well, I believe it to be my duty to partake of the two institutions of our Savior. I ought to be buried with Him in baptism unto death. I ought also, I know, to hold fellowship with Him in the Lord's supper, but I dare not join the church, for suppose I should bring dishonor upon the cause—suppose I should disgrace the church—what a sad thing it would be!" That fear is good in itself. But do you think that you would not bring disgrace on Christ's cause as it is? You are always at the place of worship. You are never away. You were always looked upon as being one of the church, though you have not made a profession. Now, if you were to sin, would it not dishonor the church even now? You know your relatives and friends esteem you to be a Christian. You would scarcely dishonor the church more if you were actually to join it, for you really are united with it! If you would be consistent, you must never go to the chapel again. Just stay away. Give up your seat—turn right down irreligious and then you cannot dishonor the church. Do one or the other, but never think you will be saving Christ's church by dishonoring God, as you really are doing now! And then I will ask you this question—Where do you think a man is safest—in the paths of obedience, or in the paths of disobedience? Now you know you are disobedient. You are quite sure of that. Do you think you are safer where your wayward will leads you, or where God's Spirit points the way? And remember this, if you cannot trust God to keep you standing, you must have a poor faith, indeed! If you cannot just risk that and be united with the church and hope that Christ will keep you, then I fear you *will* have some terrible fall! If you do not join the church, you will bring far more disgrace upon it by being outside it than you would have done if you had been united with it and had been kept. Ah, friends, I believe that union with the Christian church is often a means under God of preserving men from sin; for then they think there is a bond upon them,

and a sacred claim, and many of them are more careful what they do. And I trust there would be the same check upon you.

But now, I daresay that the poor creature who has been uttering this thinks I am about to condemn her. And the poor man who has been talking so thinks I would cut him off and say he is no child of God. God forbid! My text belongs to them. You are afraid you will fall into sin—"Surely I know that it shall be well with them who fear God, who fear before Him." If you should tell me you were not afraid of falling, I would not have you in the church for the world! You would be no Christian! All Christians, when they are in a right state, are afraid of falling into sin. *Holy fear* is the proper condition of a child of God! Even the most confident will not go into presumption. He that knows his love to the Savior and his Savior's love to him, is yet afraid lest he should dishonor Him. If there is a man who has an assurance of such a kind, as to put fear out of the question—so that he is never afraid of sinning, I will tell him he has a Satanic assurance—an assurance which came from Satan and not from God! The more assured we are of our own conversion, the more careful we should be lest we offend God and the more fearful lest by word or look, or deed, we should grieve God's Holy Spirit. I love your fear and love you, too, for it. You are my brother and sister in Jesus if you can truly say that you fear lest you should sin. Seek then, my friends, to grow in this fear of caution—obtain more and more of it! And while you do not distrust the Savior, learn to distrust yourself more and more every day!

IV. I shall not detain you many more minutes. I have only to notice in the next place the fear which I may call THE FEAR OF JEALOUSY. Strong love will usually promote jealousy. "Love is as strong as death." Then comes the next, "Jealousy is cruel as the grave." We cannot love strongly without feeling some jealousy—I mean not jealousy against the objective of our love, for "perfect love casts out fear"—but jealousy against *ourselves*. "Oh what jealousy," says the apostle, addressing the Corinthians, "what revenge," did divine grace work in you when you were first converted. The true believer, when he gets his Savior in full possession, and in blissful communion, is so jealous lest any rival should intrude in his heart. He is afraid lest his dearest friend should get more of his heart than the Savior has. He is afraid of his wealth. He trembles at his health, at his fame—at everything that is dear to him—lest it should engross his heart. Oh, how often does he pray, "My Lord, let me not be of a divided spirit. Cast down each idol—self-will, self-righteousness." And I tell you the more he loves, the more he will fear lest he should provoke his Savior by bringing a rival into his heart, and setting up an Antichrist in his spirit—so that fear goes in direct proportion to love. And the bright love is congenial and must walk side by side with the deepest jealousy and the most profound fear! Seek, my brothers and sisters, to know the

meaning of communion, and you must know then, the meaning of fear, for fear and communion must, to a great degree, go together!

V. And now, I will conclude by just mentioning that fear which is felt **WHEN WE HAVE HAD DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS**. Did you ever, in the silence of the night, look up and view the stars, feeding, like sheep, on the azure pastures of the sky? Have you ever thought of those great worlds, far, far away, divided from us by almost illimitable leagues of space? Did you ever, while musing on the starry heavens, lose yourself in thoughts of God? And have you ever felt, at such a time, that you could say with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God and the very gate of heaven." Have you ever seen the craggy hills lift their summits to the skies? Have you ever marked the tempests sailing over them and seen the thundercloud burst upon the mountain and heard the heavens shake beneath the tramp of the Most High, and seen the skies all glaring red with fire when God has sent His thunderbolts abroad? And have you not trembled that God was there? And in other and happier seasons have you not in your chamber been so wrapped in devotion—have you not so manifestly known the presence of God that you were filled with trembling? Fear took hold upon you and made all your bones shake—not because you *dreaded* God—but because you then saw some of His greatness! It is said of Moses that when he saw the burning bush he feared to look upon God. God is so great a Being that the rightly constituted mind must always fear when it approaches into His presence. The Eastern subject, when he came before his king, regarded him as a being so infinitely superior to himself that even in the vestibule he began to shake. And as he neared the throne, he began to totter and his cheeks were blanched with fear. Like Esther, he would faint when he came before the king, so glorious was his majesty! And if it is so with *earthly* monarchs, how fearful must it be to come into the presence of the King of kings and to feel one's self near Him? Why, I believe that even in heaven we shall have this kind of fear! Certainly the angels have it. They dare not look on God. They veil their faces with their wings and while they cry aloud, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts," yet they dare not view Him. The very sight of Him might destroy them and they tremble at His presence! Now this kind of fear, if you have ever felt it, if it has been produced in your heart by contemplation of God, is a high and hallowed thing, and to you this promise is addressed—"Surely I know that it shall be well with them who fear God, who fear before Him."

And now, may I go round again this morning—I cannot do it personally, yet by my voice—to the poor trembling soul who is overcome with sin? Poor man, woman, where are you? Has the devil got hold of you, and have your sins covered you up so that you cannot see the face of the sun and behold the light of mercy? Listen to me! You may never hope till you have left off *hoping in yourself!* You have never any right to believe till you

have nothing to believe in, in yourself! Until you have lost all, you have no right to take anything! But now, if you have lost all your own good works and righteousness—if you feel that there is no reason why you should be saved—that is the very reason why you should be! My Master bids me tell the naked to come to His heavenly wardrobe and take His royal garments for their clothing. He bids me tell the hungry to hasten away to His heavenly granaries and feed upon the old corn of the Kingdom to their very fullest! He bids me tell the thirsty that the river of life is broad and deep, and flows freely to all those who thirst after it! Now, sinner, if you are sick of sin and grieved at heart where you stand, follow me in spirit in these words—“O Lord, I know my guilt and I confess my misery! If You damn me to all eternity, You will be just. But, O Lord, have mercy upon me according to Your promise which You have made in Christ Jesus, unto those who confess their faults!” If that came from your heart, go out of that door and sing all the way home—for you are a pardoned sinner! You shall never see death—the second death, the death of the soul! Go home to your chamber! Let your heart burst itself in tears of thankfulness! Go and there prostrate yourself, and bless God that He has enabled you to see that only Jesus can do a helpless sinner good! And then, “Go your way. Eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart. Let your head lack no oil, and your face no ointment, for God has accepted you, and you have a right to be happy! Live cheerfully and joyfully all the days of your life, hereafter and forever!” Amen.

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INDEPENDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

NO. 149

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 31, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

***“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.”
Zechariah 4:6.***

GOD’S first and greatest objective is His own glory. There was a time, before all time, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days when God dwelt alone in the magnificence of His sublime solitude. Whether He should create or not create was a question depending upon the answer to another question—would it be to His honor or not? He determined that He would glorify Himself by creating. But, in creating, beyond all doubt, His motive was His glory. And since that time, He has always ruled the earth and even blessed it with the same objective in His infinite mind—His own glory and honor. Lesser motive for God to have were less than divine. It is the highest position to which you or I could attain, to live for God. And the very highest virtue of God is for Him to magnify Himself in all His greatness as the Infinite and the Eternal. Whatever, then, God permits or does, He does with this one motive—His own glory. And even salvation, costly though it was and infinitely a benefit to us, had for its first objective and for its grand result the exaltation of the Being and of the attributes of the Supreme Ruler.

Now, as this is true in the general of the great acts of God, this is equally true in the minutiae of them. It is true that God has a church, and that church has been redeemed, and will be preserved for His glory. And it is equally true that everything that is done to the church, in the church, or for the church either with the permission or by the power of God, is for God’s glory, as well as for the church’s welfare. You will notice in reading Scripture that whenever God has blessed the church, He has secured Himself the glory of the blessing though they have had the profit of it. Sometimes He has been pleased to redeem His people by might, but then He has so used the might and power that all the glory has come to Him and His head, alone, has worn the crown. Did He smite Egypt and lead forth His people with a strong hand and outstretched arm? The glory was not to the rod of Moses but to the Almighty power which made the rod so potent! Did He lead His people through the wilderness and defend them from their enemies? Still did He, by teaching the people their dependence upon Him, preserve to Himself all the glory! Moses nor Aaron among the priests or prophets could share the honor with Him. And tell me, if you will, of slaughtered Anak and the destruction of the tribes of Canaan. Tell me of Israel’s possessing the promised land. Tell me of Phil-

istines routed and laid heaps on heaps, of Midianites made to fall on each other. Tell me of kings and princes who fled apace and fell until the ground was white like the snow in Salmon. I will say of every one of these triumphs, "Sing you *to the Lord*, for *He* has triumphed gloriously." And I will say at the end of every victory, "Crown *Him*, crown *Him*, for *He* has done it! And let *His* name be exalted and extolled, world without end." Sometimes, however, God chooses not to employ the agency of power. If He chooses to save by might and by power, it is that glory may be unto Him. And when He says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord," it is still with the same objective and the same desire, that we may be led—

***"To give to the King of kings renown,
The Lord of Lords with glory crown,"***

God is jealous of His own honor. He will not allow even His church to be delivered in such a way as to honor men more than God. He will take to Himself the throne without a rival. He will wear a crown that never head did wear and sway a scepter that never hand has grasped, for as truly as He is God, the earth shall know that He and He, alone, has done it and unto Him shall be the glory!

Now, my objective this morning will be to glorify God by showing to you who love the Savior, that the preservation and the triumph of the church are, both of them, to be accomplished, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God in order that all the honor might be to God and none of it to man! I shall divide my text very simply. It divides itself, first, *not by might*; secondly, *nor by power*; thirdly, *but by My Spirit*.

You will ask me whether there is any distinction to be drawn between these two words, "NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER." I answer, yes. The best Hebrew scholars tell us that the, "might," in the first place, may be translated, "army." The Septuagint does so translate it. It signifies power *collectively*—the power of a number of men combined together. The second word, "power," signifies the prowess of a single individual, so that I might paraphrase my text thus—"Not by the combined might of men laboring to assist each other, nor by the separate might of any single hero, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." And now you will see the distinction which is not without a difference.

To begin then, the preservation and the triumph of the church cannot be accomplished BY MIGHT—that is, not by might collectively.

First, let us consider that collected might to represent *human armies*. The church, we affirm, can neither be preserved nor can its interests be promoted by human armies. We have all thought otherwise in our time and have foolishly said when a fresh territory was annexed to our empire, "Ah! What a providence that England has annexed India"—or taken to itself some other territory. "Now a door is opened for the gospel. A Christian power will necessarily encourage Christianity and seeing that a Christian power is at the head of the Government, it will be likely that the natives will be induced to search into the authenticity of our revela-

tion and so great results will follow. Who can tell but that at the point of the British bayonet, the gospel will be carried and that by the edge of the true sword of valiant men, Christ's gospel will be proclaimed?" I have said so myself—and now I know I am a fool for my pains and that Christ's church has been also miserably fooled—for this I will assert and prove, too, that the progress of the arms of a Christian nation is not the progress of Christianity! I will hold, and proclaim this day that the spread of our empire, so far from being advantageous to the gospel, has been hostile to it!

We will just confine our attention for a moment or two to India. I believe that British rule there has been useful in many ways. I shall not deny the civilizing influence of European society, or that great things have been done for humanity. But I do assert and can prove that there would have been greater probability of the gospel spreading in India if it had been left alone, than there has been ever since the domination of Great Britain! You thought that when Christians, as you called them, had the land, they would favor religion. Now I will state a fact which ought to go through the length and breadth of the land. It does not rest on hearsay—I was informed of it a little while ago by a clergyman upon whose memory the fact is vividly impressed. An Indian soldier in a certain regiment was converted to God by a missionary. He proposed to be baptized, and become a Christian; not a Christian after our way and fashion as a Baptist, or an Independent, or a Methodist, but a Christian according to the fashion of the Episcopal Church established in this realm. He was seen by the chaplain, and was received as a Christian. What do you think became of that soldier? Let the East India Company blush forever! He was stripped of his regimentals, dismissed from service, and sent home because he had become a Christian! Ah, we dreamed that if the sepoy had the power, they would help us! Alas, the policy of greed cannot easily be made to assist the kingdom of Christ!

But I have another string to my bow. I believe that the help of Government would have been far worse than its opposition. I do regret that the Company sometimes discourages missionary enterprise. But I believe that had they encouraged it, it would have been far worse, for their encouragement would have been the greatest hindrance we could receive. If I had tomorrow to go to India to preach the Gospel, I would pray to God, if such a thing could be, that He would give me a black face and make me like a Hindu—for otherwise I would feel that when I preached, I would be regarded as one of the lords—one of the oppressors! It may sometime be added—and I should not expect my congregation to listen to me as a man speaking to men, a brother to brother, a Christian full of love—but they would hear me and only object to me, because even my white face would give me some appearance of superiority. Why in England our missionaries and our clergymen have assumed a kind of superiority and dignity over the people! They have called themselves clergy and the people laity—and the result has been that they have weakened their influ-

ence! I have thought it right to come among my fellow men and be a man among men, just one of themselves, their equal and their friend. And they have rallied around me and not refused to love me. And I should not expect to be successful in preaching the gospel unless I might stand and feel that I am a brother, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. If I cannot stand before them thus, I cannot get at their hearts! Send me, then, to India as one of the dominant ruling race and you give me a work I cannot accomplish when you tell me to evangelize its inhabitants! In that day when John Williams fell in Erromanga, you wept, but it was a more hopeful day for Erromanga than the day when our missionaries in India first landed there! I had rather go to preach to the greatest savages who live, than I would go to preach in the place that is under British rule. Not for the fault of Britain, but simply because I, as a Briton, would be looked upon as one of the superiors, one of the lords and that would take away much of my power to do good. Now, will you just cast your eyes upon the world? Did you ever hear of a nation under British rule being converted to God? Mr. Moffat and our great friend, Dr. Livingstone, have been laboring in Africa with great success and many have been converted. Did you ever hear of Afrikaan tribes protected by England ever being converted? It is only a people who have been left to themselves and preached to by men as men, who have been brought to God; for my part, I conceive that when an enterprise begins in martyrdom, it is none the less likely to succeed. But when conquerors begin to preach the gospel to those they have conquered—it will not succeed—God will teach us that it is not by might! All swords that have ever flashed from scabbards have not aided Christ a single grain! Muslims' religion might be sustained by scimitars but Christians' religion must be sustained by love! The great crime of war can never promote the religion of peace! The battle and the garment rolled in blood are not a fitting prelude to "peace on earth, goodwill to men." And I do firmly hold that the slaughter of men—bayonets and swords and guns have never yet been, and never can be promoters of the gospel! The gospel will proceed without them but never through them. "Not by might."

Now don't be fooled again if you hear of the English conquering in China. Don't go down on your knees and thank God for it and say it's such a heavenly thing for the spread of the gospel—it is not! Experience teaches you that and if you look upon the map you will find I have stated only the truth—that where our arms have been victorious, the gospel has been hindered rather than not! So that where South Sea Islanders have bowed their knees, and cast their idols to the bats, British Hindus have kept their idols. And where Bechuanas and Bushmen have turned unto the Lord, British Affairs have not been converted—not perhaps because they were British, but because the very fact of the missionary being a Briton put him above them and weakened his influence. Hush your trumpet, O war—put away your gaudy trappings and your bloodstained drapery if you think that the cannon with the cross upon it is really

sanctified! And if you imagine that your banner has become holy, you dream a lie! God does not need you to help His cause. "It is not by armies, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord."

Now, understanding this word, "might," in another sense—to *signify great corporations*, or, as we say—denominations of men. Nowadays people get a strange notion in their head and they form what they call a denomination. It is all wrong. There never ought to have been any denominations at all, for according to Scripture, every church is independent of every other. There ought to have been as many separate churches as there were separate opinions, but denominations, which are the gathering up of those churches, I take it, ought not to have existed at all! They may do some good but they do a world of mischief. Now, when first a denomination starts it is very much opposed. Take, for instance, Methodism. How earnest were its first preachers, how indefatigably did they toil and how incessantly were they persecuted! Yet what a harvest of souls God gave to them! What a great blessing was showered from the cloud that first started at Oxford, with those few young men preaching the everlasting gospel! Methodism goes on till it grows to be a most respectable kind of society; its ramifications extend all over England and it has societies in every country—and now—God forbid I should say anything against Methodism—let those who like it believe it! I do not like it—but I do say, now, when they have come to the greatest, is the time when they are doing the least. They will confess that the ancient power of Methodism has, to a great degree, failed. That power which once seemed to turn the world upside down and set the whole of the churches on fire with a divine light and Life is, to a great degree, quenched. Wars and rumors of wars are in their camp, till, what with new connections and old connections, reformed and confessional and an infinite quantity of names, one does not know into how many fraternities they intend to divide themselves! The fact is that just when the corporation began to be the greatest, God said, "Now then. You have done your work, to a great degree. It shall not be by you any longer. Not by might, not by your allied forces. You have said your efforts will cover the earth with the gospel. Now," says God, "I will diminish you by thousands. I will take off your roll, year by year, as many as would make another denomination strong. And though you shall still exist, you shall have to weep and repent with bitterness because of your departed zeal." It is just the same with every other denomination! When we Baptists were reckoned to be the poorest lot in the world, and everybody sneered at us, we did far more good than we do now! There was far more pure doctrine and far better preaching than there is at the present time. But we began to be respectable—and just as we began to be respectable, we began to lose our power! Every fresh Gothic Baptist chapel was a diminution of simplicity, and every fresh place where the minister become intellectual, as it was called, was just a loss of evangelical might! Till now, as a denomination, we are just as low as any other—and we need some of our old leaders again—to preach the

word with demonstration, and with power, and to overthrow all those grand conventionalisms which have tried to make the Baptist denomination respectable! I pray to God I may never be called to preach to a much applauded congregation. It would be a sad and evil day. To be despised; to be spit upon; to be caricatured and to be jeered is the highest honor that a Christian minister can have! And to be pampered, flattered and applauded by men is a poor, base thing that is not worth having. If any come here and say, "They are not a respectable sort." We reply, "We labor to preach to the poor." But mark this, whenever a great denomination begins to get too great, God will cut away its horns, and take away its glory till the world shall say, "It is not by might nor by power."

And now I shall give one more application of the word, "might." It is so with one particular church just as I have been observing. I tremble for the church of which I am the pastor! I never trembled for it when we were few—when we were earnest in prayer and devout in supplication—when it was a thing of contempt to go into "that miserable Baptist chapel on Park Street." When we were despised and maligned and slandered, I never trembled for us then—God was blessing the ministry—souls were saved and we walked together in the fear of the Lord and in love! But I tremble for it now—now that God has enlarged our borders and given us to count our members not by tens but by hundreds—now that we can say we are the largest Baptist church in England. I tremble now because now is just the time when we shall begin to say, "We are a great people." "We shall do very much." "We are a great agency." "The world will look upon us and we will do a great deal." If we ever say that, God will say, "Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm," and He will hide the light of His Countenance from us, so that our mountain that stands firm shall begin to shake! O churches!—All of you here that are representatives of churches, carry the tidings. O churches! Take heed lest you trust in yourselves! Take heed lest you say, "We are a respectable body." "We are a mighty number." "We are a potent people." Take heed lest you begin to glory in your own strength, for when that is done, "Ichabod" shall be written on your walls and your glory shall depart from you! Remember that He who was with us when we were but few must be with us now we are many, or else we must fail! And He who strengthened us when we were but as "little in Israel," must be with us now that we are like "the thousands of Manasseh." Or else it is all over with us and our day is past. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord."

II. NOR BY POWER, that is, individual strength. You know, beloved, that after all, the greatest works that have been done have been done by the *ones*. The hundreds do not often do much. The companies never do—it is the units—just the single individuals that after all are the power and the might! Take any parish in England where there is a well-regulated society for doing good—it is some young woman or some young man who is the very life of it. Take any church—there are multitudes in it but it is

some two or three that do the work! Look on the Reformation. There might be many reformers, but there was but one Luther. There might be many teachers but there was but one Calvin. Look upon the preachers of the last age—the mighty preachers who stirred up the churches. There were many co-workers with them, but after all it was not Whitefield's friends, nor Wesley's friends, but the men, themselves, who did it. Individual effort is, after all, the grand thing! A man alone can do more than a man with 50 men at his heels to restrict him. Committees are very seldom of much use and sometimes bodies and societies are loss of strength instead of a gain. It is said that if Noah's ark had had to be built by a company, they would not have laid the keel yet! And it is perhaps true. There is scarcely anything done by a body—it almost always fails—because what is many men's business is just nobody's business at all! It is just the same with religion—the grand things must be done by the ones! The great works of God must be accomplished by single men. Look back through old history. Who delivered Israel from the Philistines? It was a solitary Samson. Who was it gathered the people together to rout the Midianites? It was one Gideon who cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Who was he that smote the enemy? It was one Shamgar with his ox goad, or it was an Elon who with his dagger put an end to his country's tyrant. Separate men—Davids with their slings and stones have done more than armies could accomplish! "But," says God, "it is not even by individual might the gospel is to be spread." Take individual might in different senses. Sometimes we may say, of this kind, it represents learning. We discover here and there certain great and mighty men in learning who can take an infidel, strap him on to the dissecting board and anatomize him in a minute! They are great doctors of divinity; they have achieved the highest titles that can be given them at the universities. They have read the Scriptures thoroughly, they are mighty theologians—they could dispute with John Owen and could entirely take the wind out of the sails of Calvin! They know a great deal, a very great deal. They can write most excellent reviews and are much gifted in philosophical disquisitions. But did you ever hear, in the course of all your life, of anyone of these being blessed by God to lead any great religious movement? Such a thing may have been but I have forgotten all about it! There may have been such an occurrence but I do not remember it! This *I am sure of*—the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ had taken no degree unless it was a good degree of being excellent fishermen! This *I am certain of*—that all through the ages, God has not often used men of any very great intellectual compass—they have not seemed to be men of profound learning! They have generally been men of determined will and strong principle, but not often of any very high intellectual attainments. Do I, therefore, rail at learning? O, no! God forbid! The more of that the better; let men be as wise as they can be and as learned as they can be but still, the fact remains and there is no one who can dispute it—that God has often taken the foolish things of this world to confound the wise,

in order that men may see, “It is not by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.”

I have the pleasure and happiness of being acquainted with a large number of the most eminent ministers in England. I have walked and talked with them, and spoken to them about the things of the kingdom. If they were present, they would not think me severe in what I am about to say. Many of those at whose feet we have been prepared to sit as little children to hear their wisdom, confess as ministers that when they reviewed their life, they felt that it has been unprofitable! They are learned men but they would say with Owen, “I would give up all my talents to preach like Bunyan, the tinker.” They have wished that they could be known for something else besides having attained profound learning and research. My brothers and sisters, it is not their fault! They have labored well and earnestly. I find no fault whatever with them. It is God’s supremacy that stamps this upon them and makes them feel the force of it—it is their very intellectual prowess that makes them feel this way! They are incapable of being used by God, in a mass at least, though individuals may be for any very great result in the church because then it would seem to be by *power*!

“No, no,” says one, “if a man is not learned, that does not mean much, a man must be *eloquent*.” That is another mistake—it is not by power of *eloquence* that souls are saved! I believe every man that preaches the gospel in his heart is eloquent. I have used a wrong word. I mean, however, that great oratorical powers are very seldom made use of by God for any very great result. Not even here is God pleased to let it be seen to be by power. You have heard of the preaching of Whitefield—did you ever read his sermons? If you did, you will say they were rather contemptible productions. There is nothing in them that I would think could have approached to oratory. It was only the man’s *earnestness* that made him eloquent! Have you heard any preacher who has been blessed by God to move the multitude? He has been eloquent, for he has spoken earnestly—but as to oratory there has been none of it. I, for my own part, must eschew every pretension thereunto. I am certain I never think, when I come into this pulpit, “How shall I talk to this people in a grand fashion?” I think when I come up here, “I have got something to say, I will tell it.” How I will tell them, it does not mean much to me. I daresay I will find the words somehow or other, God helping me! But about any of the *graces* of eloquence, or the words of oratory, I am utterly and quite in the dark; nor do I wish to imitate any who have been masters in it! I believe that the men whom we call eloquent, now that they are dead, were laughed at in their day as poor bungling speakers. Now they are buried, they are canonized—but in their lives they were abused!

Now, my brothers and sisters—God, I think, will generally cast a slur upon fine speaking and grand compositions, and so on, in order that He may show that it is not by individual power but by His Spirit. I could stand here and point my finger in a certain circle around this place and I

could pause at such a chapel and say, "There is a man preaching there whose compositions are worthy to be read by the most intellectual of persons, but whose chapel contains this morning a hundred souls." I will point you to another of whose preaching we can say that it was the most faultless oratory to which we ever listened—but his congregation were nearly all of them asleep! We might point you to another, of whom we could say that there was the purest simplicity, the most extraordinary beauty in the compositions he delivered, but there has not been a soul known to be saved in the chapel for years! Now, why is that? I think it is because God says it is not by power, it shall not be by individual power. And I will say this, that whenever God is pleased to raise up a man by individual power to move the world, or to work any reform, He invariably selects a man whose faults and whose errors are so glaring and apparent to everyone that we are obliged to say, "I wonder that man could do it, surely it must be of God, it could not be of that man!" No, there are some men who are too great for God's designs! Their style is too excellent. If God blessed them, the world would cry—especially the literary world—it is their *talent* that God blesses! But God, on the other hand, takes up some rough fellow, truly an earthen vessel, puts His treasure in him and just shakes the whole world! People cry, "We do not see how it is—certainly it is not in the man." The critic takes up his pen, dips it in gall, writes a most fearful character about the man. The man reads it and says, "It is true and I am glad of it, for if it had not been true, God would not have used me. I glory in my infirmities because Christ's own power rests on me. If I had not those infirmities, I could not have done so much! But the very infirmities have insured against men's saying, 'It was the man.'" I have often been delighted at some of my opponents. They have sneered at everything in me—their words have been like bruises and putrefying sores from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet! Every word has been vulgarity. Every action has been grotesque—the whole of it has been abominable and blasphemous! And I said, "Well that is delightful; now that is good." And while some persons have said, "Now we must defend our minister," I have thought, "You had better leave it alone—it is much the best that it should be so; suppose it is true? And it is, the most of it—there is all the more glory to God—for who can deny that the work is done?" And He is a great workman that can use bad tools and yet produce a fine piece of workmanship! And if the conversion of hundreds of souls now present, if the sobriety of drunkards, if the chastity of harlots, if the salvation of men who have been swearers, blasphemers, thieves and vagabonds from their youth up is not a grand result, I do not know what is! And if I have been the unwieldy, uncouth, unworthy tool employed in doing it, I bless God, for then you cannot honor me, but must give all the glory to Him and to Him all the glory belongs! He will have it proved that "It is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord."

III. And now to conclude lest I weary you. While the progress and advance of the church are neither to be accomplished by the collected might of armies, corporations, churches, separate exertions of individuals, nor by the might of learning nor of eloquence, yet both the objectives are to be accomplished BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

I was thinking, yesterday, my friends, what a magnificent change would come over the face of Christendom if God were, all of a sudden, to pour out His Spirit as He did on the day of Pentecost. I was then sitting down meditating upon this sermon, and I thought, oh, if God should pour His Spirit upon *me*, would I not leap from this place where I am now sitting, and on my knees begin to pray as I never did before? And would I not go next Sabbath to a congregation who would feel a solemn awe about them? Every word I spoke would strike like arrows from the bow of God! And they themselves would feel that it was “none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven!” Thousands would cry out, “What must I do to be saved?” And they would go away carrying the divine fire till the whole of this city would be kindled! And then I had pictured to myself what would come over all the churches if they were in the same condition, and all the people received that same Spirit. I had seen the minister from Monday morning till Saturday night doing little or nothing—delivering his weekly lecture, attending one prayer meeting, and thinking himself hard worked. I saw him, all of a sudden, start from his couch and go round to all the sick of his chapel and I marked how he delivered a short address of comfort to the sick with such holy gravity and such divine simplicity, that they lifted their heads from their pillows and began to sing, even in the agonies of death! I thought I saw others of them girding up their loins and crying, “What am I doing? Men are perishing, and I am preaching to them but three times a week, and am called to the work of the ministry.” I thought I read of all those ministers going into the open air to preach next Monday night. I thought I saw the whole of them flying, like angels fly, to-and-fro through this land. And then I thought I saw the deacons all full of the Spirit, too, and found them with all their powers doing everything in the fear of God. I found those who had been lords and rulers no longer seeking to be like Diotrepes. I saw the heavenly influence spread over every mind! I saw the vestries too small for the prayer meetings and I saw the chapels crowded and I heard the brothers who year after year had prayed the same monotonous prayer, break forth in earnest burning words! I saw the whole assembly melted in tears when the pastor addressed them and urged them to prayer and I heard the brothers, one by one, as they rose up, speak like men who had been with Jesus and had learned how to pray! They prayed as if they had heard Christ pray in Gethsemane—that prayer which was such as never man prayed! And then I thought I saw all those members and those deacons and those pastors going out into the world. And, oh, I pictured what preaching there would be, what tract distributing, what alms giving, what holy living! And then I already thought

I heard every house at vesper uttering its song and every cottage in the early morn sending up its prayer to heaven. I thought I saw upon every plowshare, "Consecrated to God," and every bell upon the horses, "Holiness unto the Lord." And then I thought I saw the different denominations rushing into each other's arms! I saw the bishop doff his miter and clasp his dissenting brother and call him friend and bid him preach in his cathedral! And I thought I saw the stiff Puritan dissenter casting away his hatred of conformity, and receiving the Church of England brother to his heart! I thought I saw baptized and unbaptized sitting at one table. I saw Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Independent and Quaker agreeing in one thing—that Christ crucified was all—and clasping one another's hands! Yes, and then I thought I saw the angels coming down from heaven. And it was not long before I finished my daydream by hearing the shout—"Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" It was a daydream but it will be true some day. By the Spirit of God all this will be accomplished. How and by what means I know not, but I know the great agency must be the Holy Spirit!

And now, dear friends, let me counsel you. The grand thing the church needs in this time is God's Holy Spirit. You all set up plans and say, "Now, if the church were altered a little bit, it would go on better." You think if there were different ministers, or different church order, or something different, then all would be well. No, dear friends, it is not there where the mistake lies—it is that we don't want more of the Spirit! It is as if you saw a locomotive engine upon a railway and it would not go and they put up a driver and they said, "Now, that driver will do." They try another and another. One proposes that such-and-such a wheel should be altered but still it will not go. Someone then bursts in among those who are conversing and says, "No, friends! The reason why it will not move is because there is no steam! You have no fire, you have no water in the boiler—that's why it will not go! There may be some faults about it. It needs a bit of paint here and there but it will go well enough with all those faults if you do but get the steam up!" But now people are saying, "This must be altered and that must be altered." But it would go no better unless God the Spirit should come to bless us. You may have the same ministers and they shall be a thousand times more useful for God, if God is pleased to bless them! You shall have the same deacons, they shall be a thousand times more influential than they are now when the Spirit is poured down upon them from on high! That is the church's great need and until that need is supplied, we may reform and reform and still be just the same. We need the Holy Spirit and then whatever faults there may be in our organization, they can never materially impede the progress of Christianity when once the Spirit of the Lord God is in our midst!

But I beseech you be earnest in praying for this. Do you know that there is no reason today why I should not have preached today so that every soul in the place was converted, if God the Holy Spirit had been

pleased to manifest Himself? There is not any solitary shadow of a reason why every soul that has been within the sound of my lips should not have been converted by something said today if God the Holy Spirit had been pleased to bless the word! Now I will repeat—there is not a humble Primitive Methodist, nor a poor insignificant preacher of any sort on earth, but who, if he preaches the truth, God the Spirit may not make as useful in conversion as any of the great departed who are now before God's throne! All we need is the *Spirit of God*. Dear Christian friends, go home and pray for it! Give no rest until God reveals Himself. Do not tarry. Here you are—do not be content to go on in your everlasting jog—trot as you go! Do not be content with the mere round of formalities. Awake, O Zion! Awake, awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Jerusalem! Start from your slumbers, awake from your lethargy and cry unto God and say unto Him, “Awake, awake! Put on Your strength, O arm of the Lord, as in the ancient days.” Then when He shall do it, you will find that while it is not by might, nor by power, it is by God's Spirit!

And now I conclude with a brief address that shall not occupy but a moment. Sinner, unconverted sinner, you have often tried to save yourself, but you have often failed. You have, by your own power and might, sought to curb your evil passions and licentious desires within you. I lament that all your efforts have been unsuccessful! And I warn you—it will always be unsuccessful—for *you* can never by your own might save yourself! With all the strength you have, you can never regenerate your own soul! You can never cause yourself to be born-again and though the new birth is absolutely necessary, it is absolutely impossible to you unless God the Spirit shall do it! I pray for you that God the Spirit may convict you of sin and if you are already convicted, I bid you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He has died for you, has washed away your sins! You are forgiven! Believe that! Be happy and go your way rejoicing! And God Almighty be with you until you die!

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INDIA'S ILLS AND ENGLAND'S SORROWS

NO. 150

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”
Jeremiah 9:1.*

SOMETIMES tears are base things; the offspring of a cowardly spirit. Some men weep when they should knit their brows and many a woman weeps when she should resign herself to the will of God. Many of those briny drops are but an expression of child-like weakness. It were well if we could wipe such tears away and face a frowning world with a constant countenance. But oftentimes tears are the index of strength! There are periods when they are the noble things in the world. The tears of penitents are precious—a cup of them worth a king's ransom! It is no sign of weakness when a man weeps for sin. It shows that he has strength of mind no more—that he has strength imparted by God which enables him to forswear his lusts and overcome his passions and to turn unto God with full purpose of heart. And there are other tears, too, which are the evidences not of weakness but of might—the tears of tender sympathy are the children of strong affection and they are strong like their parents. He that loves much, must weep much—much love and much sorrow must go together in this vale of tears. The unfeeling heart, the unloving spirit may pass from earth's portal to its utmost bound almost without a sigh except for itself. But he who loves has dug as many wells of tears as he has chosen objects of affection, for by as many as our friends are multiplied, by so many must our griefs be multiplied, too, if we have love enough to share in their griefs and to bear their burden for them. The largest hearted man will miss many sorrows that the little man will feel, but he will have to endure many sorrows the poor narrow-minded spirit never knows. It needs a mighty prophet like Jeremiah to weep as mightily as he. Jeremiah was not weak in his weeping; the strength of his mind, and the strength of his love were the parents of his sorrow. “Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.” This is no expression of weak sentimentalism! This is no utterance of a mere whining presence. It is the burst of a strong soul—strong in its affection, strong in its devotion, strong in its self-sacrifice! I would to God we all knew how to weep like this! And if we might not weep so frequently as Jeremy, I wish that when we did weep, we did weep as well.

It would seem as if some men had been sent into this world for the very purpose of being the world's weepers. God's great house is thoroughly furnished with everything. Everything that can express the thoughts and the emotions of the inhabitant, God has made. I find in Nature plants to be everlasting weepers. There by the lonely brook, where the maiden casts away her life, the willow weeps forever. And there in the graveyard where men lie slumbering till the trumpet of the archangel shall awaken them, stands the dull cypress mourning in its somber garments. Now, as it is with nature, so it is with the race of man. Mankind has bravery and boldness—they must have their heroes to express their courage. Mankind has some love to their fellow creatures. They must have their fine philanthropists to live out mankind's philanthropy. Men have their sorrows, they must have their weepers. They must have men of sorrows who have it for their avocation and their business, to weep—from the cradle to the grave to be always weeping—not so much for themselves as for the woes of others. It may be I have some such here. I shall be happy to enlist their sympathies. And truly if I have none of that race, I shall boldly appeal to the whole mass of you and I will bring before you causes of great grief. And when I bid you by the love you bear to man and to his God to begin to weep, if you have tears, these hard times will compel you to shed them now! Come; let me show you why I have taken this as my text, and why I have uttered this mournful language. And if your hearts are not as impassive as stone, surely there should be some tears shed this morning, for if I am not foolish in my utterances and faint in my speech, you will go home to your chambers to weep there. "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

I need your griefs this morning, first, *for persons actually slain*—"the slain of the daughter of our people." And then I shall need your tears *for those morally slain*, "the slain of the daughter of our people."

I. To begin—with ACTUAL MURDER AND REAL BLOODSHED. My brothers and sisters, our hearts are sick near unto death with the terrible news brought us post after post, telegraph after telegraph. We have read many letters of the Times, day after day, until we have folded up that paper and professed before God that we could read no more. Our spirits have been harrowed by the most fearful and unexpected cruelty. We, perhaps, may not have been personally interested in the bloodshed, so far as our own husbands, wives, brothers and sisters have been concerned—but we have felt the tie of kindred very strongly when we have found our race so cruelly butchered in the land of the East! Today it is for us to humbly confess our crime. The government of India has been a cruel government. It has much for which to appear before the bar of God. Its tortures—if the best evidence is to be believed—have been of the most inhuman kind. God forgive the men who have committed such crimes in the British name! But those days are past. May God blot out the sin. We

do not forget our own guilt. But an overwhelming sense of the guilt of others who have with such cold-hearted cruelty tormented men and women may well excuse us if we do not dilate upon the subject!

Alas! Alas, for our brethren there! They have died. Alas for them! They have been slain by the sword of treachery and traitorously murdered by men who swore allegiance. Alas for them! But, O you soldiers, we weep not for you! Even when you were tortured, you had not that high dishonor to bear to which the other sex has been obliged to submit. O England! Weep for your daughters with a bitter lamentation! Let your eyes run down with rivers of blood for them! Had they been crushed within the folds of the hideous boa, or had the fangs of the tiger been red with their blood, happy would their fate have been compared with the indignities they have endured! O Earth! You have beheld crimes which antiquity could not parallel! You have seen bestial lust gratified upon the purest and the best of mortals! God's fairest creatures stained—those loved ones who could not brook the name of lust—given up to the embraces of incarnate devils! Weep, Britain, weep, weep for your sons and for your daughters! If you are now cold-hearted; if you now read the tale of infamy without a tear, you are no mother to them! Surely your heart must have failed you and you have become less loving than your own lions and less tender than beasts of prey if you do not weep for the maiden and the wife! Brothers and sisters, I am not straining history! I am not endeavoring to be pathetic where there is no pathos. No! My subject of itself is all pathos. It is my poor way of speaking that spoils it. I have not today to act the orator's part, to garnish up that which was nothing before. I have not to magnify little griefs—rather I feel that all my utterances do but diminish the woe which every thoughtful man must feel. Oh, how have our hearts been harrowed, cut in pieces, melted in the fire! Agony has seized upon us and unutterable grief when, day after day, our hopes have been disappointed and we have heard that the rebel still rages in his fury and still with despotic might does as he pleases with the sons and daughters, the husbands and the wives of England! Weep, Christians, weep! And you ask me of what use shall be your weeping. I bid you weep today because the spirit of vengeance is gathering! Britain's wrath is stirred! A black cloud is hanging over the head of the mutinous Sepoys! Their fate shall be most dreadful, their doom most tremendous when England shall smite the murderers, as justly she must! There must be judicial punishment enacted upon these men, so terrible that the earth shall tremble and both the ears of him that hears it shall tingle! I am inclined, if I can, to sprinkle some few cooling tears upon the fires of vengeance.

No, no, we will not take vengeance upon ourselves! "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Let not Britain's soldiers push their enemies to destruction through a spirit of vengeance. As men, let them do it as the appointed executioners of the sentence of our laws. According to the civil code of every country under heaven, these men are con-

demned to die. Not as soldiers should we war with them but as malefactors we must execute the law upon them. They have committed treason against government and for that crime alone the doom is death! But they are murderers and rightly or wrongly, our law is that the murderer must die the death. God must have this enormous sin punished and though we would feel no vengeance as Britons, yet, for the sake of government, God's established government on earth, the ruler who bears the sword must not now bear the sword in vain! Long have I held that war is an enormous crime. Long have I regarded all battles as but murder on a large scale—but this time, I, a peaceful man, a follower of the peaceful Savior, do propose war! No, it is not war that I propose, but a just and proper punishment! I will not aid and abet soldiers as *warriors* but as *executioners* of a lawful sentence which ought to be executed upon men, who, by the double crime of infamous debauchery and fearful bloodshed, have brought upon themselves the ban and curse of God! They must be punished, or truth and innocence can never walk this earth! As a rule I do not believe in the utility of capital punishment, but the crime has been attended with all the horrid guilt of the cities of the plain, and is too bestial to be endured. But still I say, I would cool down the vengeance of Britons and therefore I would bid you weep. You talk of vengeance, but you know not the men with whom you have to deal. Many a post may come and many a month run round and many a year may pass before you hear of victory over those fierce men. Be not too proud. England talked once of her great deeds and she has since been humbled. She may yet again learn that she is not omnipotent. But you people of God, weep, weep for this sin that has broken loose! Weep for this hell that has found its way to earth. Go to your chambers and cry out to God to stop this bloodshed! You are to be the saviors of your nation—not on the bayonets of British soldiery—but on the prayers of British Christians do we rest! Run to your houses, fall upon your knees, lament most bitterly for this desperate sin! And then cry to God to save! Remember, He hears prayer—prayer moves the arm of the Omnipotent. Let us proclaim a fast. Let us gather a solemn assembly. Let us cry mightily unto Him. Let us ask the God of armies to avenge Himself. Let us pray Him so to send the light of the gospel into the land, that such a crime may be impossible a second time! And this time, so to put it down that it may never have an opportunity of breaking loose again. I know not whether our government will proclaim a national fast. But certain I am it is time that every Christian should celebrate one in his own heart. I bid all of you with whom my word has one atom of respect. If my exhortation has one word of force, I do exhort you to spend special time in prayer just now. Oh, my friends, you cannot hear the shrieks, you have not seen the terror-stricken faces, you have not beheld the flying fugitives, but you may picture them in your imagination—and he must be accursed who does not pray to God and lift up his soul in earnest prayer—that He would be pleased now to

put His shield between our fellow-subjects and their enemies. And you, especially, the representatives of many congregations in various parts of this land, give unto God no rest until He is pleased to bestir Himself! Make this your cry—"O Lord our God arise and let Your enemies be scattered, and let all them who hate You become as the fat of rams." So shall God, through your prayers, perhaps establish peace and vindicate justice and, "God, even our own God, shall bless us and that right early."

II. But I have now a greater reason for your sorrow—a more disregarded and yet more dreadful source of woe. If the first time we said it with plaintive voice, we must a second time say it yet more plaintively—"Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night," FOR THE MORALLY SLAIN of the daughter of my people. The old adage is still true, "One-half of the world knows nothing about how the other half lives." A large proportion of you professing Christians have been respectably brought up. You have never in your lives been the visitants of the dens of infamy. You have never frequented the haunts of wickedness and you know but very little of the sins of your fellow creatures. Perhaps it is well that you should remain as ignorant as you are—for to be ignorant is to be free from temptation! It would be folly to be wise. But there are others who have been obliged to see the wickedness of their fellows. And a public teacher, especially, is bound not to speak from mere hearsay, but to know from authentic sources what is the spirit of the times. It is our business to look with eagle eyes through every part of this land and see what crime is rampant—what kind of crime and what sort of infamy. Ah, my friends, with all the advancement of piety in this land; with all the hopeful signs of better times; with all the sunlight of glory heralding the coming morn; with all the promises and with all our hopes we are still obliged to bid you weep because sin abounds and iniquity is still mighty! Oh, how many of our sons and daughters, of our friends and relatives are slain by sin! You weep over battlefields, you shed tears on the plains of Balaklava—there are worse battlefields than these and worse deaths than those inflicted by the sword!

Ah, weep for the drunkenness of this land! How many thousands of our race reel from our sin-palaces into perdition! Oh, if the souls of departed drunkards could be seen at this hour by the Christians of Britain, they would tremble! Lift up your hands in sorrow and begin to weep! My soul might be an everlasting Niobe, perpetually dropping showers of tears, if it might know the doom and the destruction brought on them by that one demon and by that one demon only! I am no enthusiast, I am no total abstainer—I do not think the cure of England's drunkenness will come from that quarter. I respect those who thus deny themselves with a view to the good of others and should be glad to believe that they accomplish their objective. But though I am no total abstainer, I hate drunkenness as much as any man breathing, and have been the means of bring-

ing many poor creatures to relinquish this bestial indulgence! We believe drunkenness to be an awful crime and a horrid sin! We look on all its dreadful effects and we stand prepared to go to war with it and to fight side by side with abstainers, even though we may differ from them as to the mode of warfare. Oh, England! How many thousands of your sons are murdered every year by that accursed devil of drunkenness that has such sway over this land!

But there are other crimes too. Alas for that crime of *debauchery*! What scenes has the moon seen every night! Sweetly did she shine last evening; the meadows seemed as if they were silvered with beauty when she shone upon them. But ah, what sins were transacted beneath her pale sway! Oh, God, only You know—our hearts might be sickened and we might indeed cry for, “A lodge in some vast wilderness,” had we seen what God beheld when He looked down from the moon-lit sky! You tell me that sins of that kind are common in the lower class of society. Alas, I know it. Alas, how many a girl has dashed herself into the river to take away her life because she could not bear the infamy that was brought upon her! But lay not this to the poor! The infamy and sin of our streets begin not with them. It begins with the highest ranks—with what we call the noble classes of society! Men who have defiled themselves and others will and do stand in our senates and walk among our peers. Men whose characters are not reputable—it is a shame to speak even of the things that are done by them in secret—are received into the drawing rooms and into the parlors of the highest society—while the poor creature who has been the victim of their passions is hooted and cast away! O Lord God, You alone know the awful ravages that this sin has made! My God, Your servant's lips can utter no more than this—he has gone to the verge of his utterance! He feels that he has no further license in his speech—still he may well cry—“Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” If you have walked the hospital; if you have seen the refuges; if you have talked with the inmates—and if you know the gigantic spread of that enormous evil—you may well sympathize with me when I say that at the thought of it my spirit is utterly cast down! I feel that I would rather die than live while sin thus reigns and iniquity thus spreads!

But are these the only evils? Are these the only demons that are devouring our people? Ah, would to God it were so. Behold throughout this land how men are falling by every sin, disguised as it is under the shape of pleasure! Have you ever, as from some distant journey returned to your houses at midnight, seen the multitudes of people who are turning out of casinos, low theatres and other houses of sin? I do not frequent those places, nor from earliest childhood have I ever trod those floors, but from the company that I have seen issuing from these dens, I could only lift up my hands and pray God to close such places! They seem to

be the gates of hell and their doors, as they very properly themselves say, "Lead to the pit." Ah, may God be pleased to raise up many who shall warn this city and bid Christian people by day and night, "for the slain of the daughter of our people!" Christians, never leave off weeping for men's sins and infamies! There are sins by day. God's own day—this day—is defiled, is broken in pieces and trod under foot! There are sins committed every morning and sins each night. If you could see them, you might never be happy. If you could walk in the midst of them and behold them with your eyes—if God would give you grace, you might perpetually weep—for you would always have cause for sorrow! "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

But now I must just throw in something which will more particularly apply to you. Perhaps I have very few here who would indulge in open and known sin. Perhaps most of you belong to the good and amiable class who have every kind of virtue and of whom it must be said, "One thing you lack." My heart never feels so grieved as at the sight of you. How often have I been entertained most courteously and hospitably, as the Lord's servant, in the houses of men and of women whose characters are supremely excellent. They have every virtue that could adorn a Christian—except faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! They might be held up as the very mirrors and patterns to be imitated by others. How has my heart grieved when I have thought of these, still undecided, still godless, prayerless and Christless! I have many of you in this congregation today—I could not put my finger upon one solitary fault in your character—you are scrupulously correct in your morals. But alas, alas, alas for you, that you should still be dead in trespasses and sins because you have not been renewed by divine grace! So lovely and yet without faith! So beautiful, so admirable and yet not converted! O God, when drunkards die, when swearers perish, when harlots and seducers sink to the fate they have earned, we may well weep for such sinners—but when these who have walked in our midst and have almost been acknowledged as believers are cast away because they lack the one thing necessary—it seems enough to make angels weep! O members of churches, you may well take up the cry of Jeremiah when you remember what multitudes of these you have in your midst—men who have a name to live and are dead! And others, who though they profess not to be Christians, are almost persuaded to obey their Lord and Master, but are yet not partakers of the divine life of God!

Now I shall need, if I can, to press this pathetic subject a little further upon your minds. In the day when Jeremiah wept this lamentation with an exceeding loud and bitter cry, Jerusalem was in all her mirth and merriment. Jeremiah was a sad man in the midst of a multitude of merry makers! He told them that Jerusalem would be destroyed, that their temple would become a heap and Nebuchadnezzar would lay it with the

ground. They laughed him to scorn. They mocked him. Still the viol and the dance were only to be seen. Do you not picture that brave old man, for he was bravely plaintive, sitting down in the courts of the temple? And though as yet the pillars were unfallen and the golden roof was yet unstained, he lifted up his hands and pictured to himself this scene of Jerusalem's temple burned with fire, her women and her children carried away captive and her sons given to the sword. And when he pictured this, he did, as it were, in spirit set himself down upon one of the broken pillars of the temple and there, in the midst of desolation which was not as yet—but which faith, the evidence of things not seen, did picture to him—cry, “Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears.” And now, today, here are many of you, fakes and merry makers in this ball of life—you are here merry and glad today and you marvel that I should talk of you as persons for whom we ought to weep. “Weep for me!?” you say, “I am in health, I am in riches, I am enjoying life! Why weep for me? I need none of your sentimental weeping!” Ah, but we weep because we foresee the future! If you could live here always we might not, perhaps, weep for you. But we, by the eye of faith, look forward to the time when the pillars of heaven must totter; when this earth must shake; when death must give up its prey; when the great white throne must be set in the clouds of heaven, and the thunder and lightning of Jehovah shall be launched in armies. And the angels of God shall be marshaled in their ranks to swell the pomp of the grand judgment—we look forward to that hour and by faith we see you standing before the Judge. We see His eyes fixed sternly on you—we hear Him read the book. We mark your tottering knees while sentence after sentence of thundering wrath strikes on your appalled ears! We think we see your blanched countenances. We mark your terror beyond all description when He cries, “Depart, you cursed!” We hear your shrieks! We hear you cry, “Rocks hide us! Mountains fall on us!” We see the angel with fiery brands pursuing you—we hear your last unutterable shriek of woe as you descend into the pit of hell! And we ask you if you could see this as we see it, would you wonder that at the thought of your destruction we are prepared to weep? “Oh that my head were waters and my eyes were a fountain of tears that I might weep” over you who will not stand in the judgment but must be driven away like chaff into the unquenchable fire!

And by the eye of faith we look further than that. We look into the grim and awful future—our faith looks through the gate of iron bound with adamant. We see the place of the condemned. Our ears, opened by faith, hear, “The sullen groans and hollow moans and shrieks of tortured ghosts!” Our eyes anointed with heavenly eye salve see the worm that never dies. We behold the fire that can never be quenched and see you writhing in the flames! O professors, if you believed not in the wrath to come and in eternal hell, I would not wonder that you were unmoved by such a thought as this! But if you believe what your Savior said when He

declared that He would destroy both body and soul in hell, I must wonder that you could endure the thought without weeping for your fellow creatures who are going there! If I saw my enemy marching into the flames, I would rush between him and the fire and seek to preserve him. And will you see men and women marching on in a mad career of vice and sin, well aware that "the wages of sin is death," and will you not interpose so much as a tear? What? Are you more brutal than the beast, more impassive than the stone! It must be so, if the thought of the unutterable torment of hell does not draw tears from your eyes and prayer from your hearts. Oh, if today some strong archangel could unbolt the gates of hell and for a solitary second permit the voices of wailing and weeping to come up to our ears—oh, how we would grieve! Each man and woman would put their hands upon their loins and walk this earth in terror! That shriek might make each hair stand on end upon our heads and then make us roll ourselves in the dust for anguish and woe—

***"Oh, doleful state of dark despair,
When God has far removed
And fixed their dreadful station where
They must not taste His love."***

Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep for some of you that are going there this day!

Remember, again, O Christian, that those for whom we ask you to weep this day are persons who have had great privileges and consequently, if lost, must expect greater punishment! I do not today ask your sympathies for men in foreign lands. I shall not bid you weep for Afrikaans or Muslims, though you might weep for them and you have goodly cause to do so—but I ask this day your tears for the slain of the daughter of your own people! Oh, what multitudes of heathens we have in all our places of worship! What multitudes of unconverted persons in all the pews of the places where we usually assemble to worship God! And I may add what hundreds we have here who are without God, without Christ, without hope in the world! And these are not like Afrikaans who have not heard the Word of God—they have heard it and they have rejected it! Many of you, when you die, cannot plead as an excuse that you did not know your duty. You heard it plainly preached to you. You heard it in every corner of the streets. You had the book of God in your houses. You cannot say that you did not know what you must do to be saved. You read the Bible, you understand salvation; many of you are deeply taught in the theory of salvation; but when you perish, your blood must be on your own head, and the Master may well cry over you today, "Woe unto you, Bethsaida, woe unto you Chorazin, for if the mighty works that were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." I wonder at myself this day. I hate my eyes. I feel as if I could pluck them from their sockets because they will not weep as I desire, over poor souls who are perishing! How many have I among you whom I love and who love me? We are no strangers to one

another. We could not live at a distance from each other—our hearts have been joined together long and firmly. You have stood by me in the hour of tribulation; you have listened to the word; you have been pleased with it. I bear you witness that if you could pluck out your eyes for me, you would do it! And yet I know there are many of you true lovers of God's Word in appearance and certainly great lovers of God's servant, but alas for you, that you should still be in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity! Alas, my sister, I can weep for you! Woe, woe, my brother, I can weep for you! We have met together in God's house—we have prayed together, and yet we must be separated! Shepherd, some of your flock will perish! O sheep of my pasture, people of my care, must I have that horrid thought upon me that I must lose you? Must we, at the day of judgment, say farewell forever? Must I bear my witness against you? I shall be honest. I have dealt faithfully with your souls. God is my witness, I have often preached in weakness. Often have I had to groan before Him that I have not preached as I could desire. But I have never preached insincerely. Nobody will ever dare to accuse me of dishonesty in this respect! Not one of your smiles have I ever courted. I have never dreaded your frowns. I have oftentimes been in weariness when I should have rested, preaching God's Word. But what of that? That is nothing! Only remember there is some responsibility resting upon you. And remember, that to perish under the sound of the gospel is to perish more terribly than anywhere else! But, my hearers, must that be your lot? And must I be witness against you in the day of judgment? I pray God it may not be so! I beseech the Master that He may spare us each such a fate as that.

And now, dear friends I have one word to add before I leave this point. Some of you need not look round in this congregation to find cause for weeping. My pious brothers and sisters, you have cause enough to weep in your own families! Ah, mother, I know your griefs. You have had cause to cry to God with weeping eyes for many a mournful hour because of your son. Your offspring has turned against you. And he that came forth of you has despised his mother's God! Father, you have carefully brought up your daughter; you have nourished her when she was young, and taken her fondly in your arms. She was the delight of your life, yet she has sinned against you and against God. Many of you have sons and daughters who you often mention in your prayers, but never with hope; you have often thought that God has said of your son, "Ephraim is given to idols. Let him alone." The child of your affection has become an adder stinging your heart! Oh, then weep, I beseech you! Parents, do not leave off weeping for your children—do not become hardened towards them, sinners though they are. It may be that God may yet bring them to Himself. It was but last church meeting that we received into our communion a young friend who was educated and brought up by a pious minister in Colchester. She had been there many years, and when she went away to

London, the minister said to her, "Now, my girl, I have prayed for you hundreds of times, and I have done all I can with you. Your heart is as hard as a stone; I must leave you with God!" That broke her heart. She is now converted to Jesus! How many sons and daughters have made their parents feel the same! "There," they have said, "I must leave you, I cannot do more." But in saying that, they have not meant that they would leave them unwept for, but they have thought within themselves that if they were damned, they would follow them weeping to the very gates of hell if by tears they could decoy them into heaven! How can a man be a Christian and not love his offspring? How can a man be a believer in Jesus Christ, and yet have a cold and hard heart in the things of the kingdom towards his children? I have heard of ministers of a certain sect and professors of a certain class who have despised family prayer, who have laughed at family godliness and thought nothing of it. I cannot understand how the men can know as much as they do about the gospel, and yet have so little of the spirit of it! I pray God deliver you and deliver me from anything like that! No, it is our business to train up our children in the fear of the Lord. And though we cannot give them divine grace, it is ours to pray to the God who *can* give it! And in answer to our many supplications, He will not turn us away but He will be pleased to take notice of our prayers and to regard our sighs.

And now, Christian mourners, I have given you work enough—may God the Holy Spirit enable you to do it. Let me exhort you, yet once again, to weep. Do you need a copy? Behold your Master! He has come to the brow of the hill. He sees Jerusalem lying on the hill opposite to Him. He looks down upon it and as He sees it there—beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth—instead of feeling the rapture of some artist who surveys the ramparts of a strong city and marks the position of some magnificent tower in the midst of glorious scenery, He bursts out and he cries, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings but you would not; behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Go now your ways and as you stand on any of the hills around and behold this huge city lying in the valley, say—"O London, London! How great your guilt. Oh, that the Master would gather you under His wing and make you His city, the joy of the whole earth! O London, London! Full of privileges and full of sin, exalted to heaven by the gospel! You shall be cast down to hell by your rejection of it!" And then, when you have wept over London, go and weep over the street in which you live, as you see the Sabbath broken and God's laws trampled upon and men's bodies profaned—go and weep! Weep for the court in which you live in your humble poverty! Weep for the square in which you live in your magnificent wealth! Weep for the humbler street in which you live in competence. Weep for your neighbors and your friends, lest any of them, having lived godless, may die godless! Then go to your house—weep for your family,

for your servants, for your husband, for your wife, for your children! Weep, weep, cease not weeping till God has renewed them by His Spirit! And if you have any friends with whom you sinned in your past life, be earnest for their salvation! George Whitefield said there were many young men with whom he played at cards in his lifetime, and spent hours in wasting his time when he ought to have been about other business. And when he was converted, his first thought was, "I must, by God's grace, have these converted too." And he never rested till he could say that he did not know of one of them, a companion of his guilt, who was not now a companion with him in the tribulation of the gospel! Oh, let it be so with you! Let not your exertions end in tears—mere weeping will do nothing without action! Get on your feet, you men who have voices and might—go forth and preach the gospel, preach it in every street and lane of this huge city! You who have wealth, go forth and spend it for the poor, and sick, and needy, and dying, the uneducated, the unenlightened. You who have time, go forth and spend it in deeds of goodness. You who have power in prayer, go forth and pray! You who can handle the pen, go forth and write down iniquity—everyone to his post—everyone of you to your gun in this day of battle for God and for His truth; for God, and for the right let every one of us who knows the Lord seek to fight under His banner! O God, without whom all our exertions are vain, come now and stir up Your church to greater diligence, and more affectionate earnestness that we may not have in future such cause to weep as we have this day! Sinners, believe on the Lord Jesus! He has died—look to Him and live, and God the Almighty bless you! To God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be Glory forever and ever.

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THE CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST

NO. 151

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich.”
2 Corinthians 8:9.

THE apostle, in this chapter, was endeavoring to stir up the Corinthians to generosity. He desired them to contribute something for those who were the poor in the flock that he might be able to minister to their necessities. He tells them that the churches of Macedonia, though very much poorer than the church at Corinth, had done even beyond their means for the relief of the Lord's family and he exhorts the Corinthians to do the same! But suddenly remembering that examples taken from inferiors seldom have a powerful effect, he lays aside his argument drawn from the church of Macedonia and he holds before them a reason for being generous which the hardest heart can scarcely resist, if once that reason is applied by the Spirit. “My brethren,” he said, “there is One above, by whom you hope you have been saved, One whom you call Master and Lord. Now if you will but imitate Him, you cannot be ungenerous, for, my brethren, I tell you a thing which is an old thing with you and an undisputed truth—‘For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich.’ Let this constrain you to benevolence.” O Christian, whenever you are inclined to an avaricious withholding from the church of God, think of your Savior giving up all that He had to serve you and can you then, when you behold self-denial so noble—can you then be selfish and regard yourself? When the claims of the poor of the flock are pressed upon you, remember Jesus! Imagine you see Him look you in the face and say to you, “I gave Myself for you and do you withhold yourself from Me? If you do so, you know not My love in all its heights and depths and lengths and breadths.”

And now, dear friends, the argument of the apostle shall be our subject today. It divides itself in an extremely simple manner. We have, first, the pristine condition of our Savior—“*He was rich.*” We have next, His condescension—“*He became poor.*” And then, we have the effect and result of His poverty—“*That we might be made rich.*” We shall then close by giving you a doctrine, a question and an exhortation. May God bless all these and help us to tell them aright.

I. First, then, our text tells us THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS RICH. Think not that our Savior began to live when He was born of the Virgin Mary. Imagine not that He dates His existence from the manger at Bethlehem. Remember He is the Eternal! He is before all things and by Him all things consist. There was never a time in which there was not God. And just so, there was never a period in which there was not Christ Jesus our Lord! He is self-existent, has no beginning of days, neither end of years. He is the Immortal, Invisible, the only wise God, our Savior! Now, in the past eternity which had elapsed before His mission to this world, we are told that Jesus Christ was rich and to those of us who believe His glories and trust in His divinity, it is not hard to see how He was so. Jesus was rich in possessions. Lift up your eyes, believer, and for a moment review the riches of my Lord Jesus before He condescended to become poor for you! Behold Him sitting upon His throne and declaring His own all-sufficiency. "If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills are Mine; Mine are the hidden treasures of gold; Mine are the pearls that the diver cannot reach; Mine every precious thing that earth has seen." The Lord Jesus might have said, "I can stretch My scepter from the east even to the west and all is Mine, the whole of this world and yonder worlds that glitter in far off space, all are Mine. The illimitable expanse of unmeasured space, filled as it is with worlds that I have made—all this is Mine. Fly upward and you cannot reach the summit of the hill of My dominions! Dive downwards and you cannot enter into the innermost depths of My sway; from the highest throne in glory to the lowest pit of hell, all, all is Mine without exception. I can put the broad arrow of My kingdom upon everything that I have made."

But He had more—which makes men still richer. We have heard of kings in olden times who were fabulously rich and when their riches were summed up we read in the old romances, "And this man was possessed of the philosopher's stone, whereby he turned all things into gold." Surely all the treasures that he had before were as nothing compared with this precious stone that brought up the rear! Now, whatever might be the wealth of Christ in things created, He has the *power of creation* and therein lies His boundless wealth! If He had pleased He could have spoken worlds into existence. He had but to lift His finger and a new universe as boundless as the present would have leaped into existence! At the will of His mind, millions of angels would have stood before Him. Legions of bright spirits would have flashed into being. He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast. He who said, "Light be," and light was—had power to say to all things, "Be," and they would be! Herein, then, lies His riches. This creating power is one of the brightest jewels of His crown.

We call men rich, too, who have *honor* and though men have ever so much wealth, yet if they are in disgrace and shame they must not reckon themselves among the rich. But our Lord Jesus has honor—honor such

as none but a divine being could receive! When He sat upon His throne, before He relinquished the glorious mantle of His sovereignty to become a man, all earth was filled with His glory. He could look both beneath and all around Him and the inscription, "glory be unto God," was written over all space! Day and night the smoking incense of praise ascended before Him from golden vials held by spirits who bowed in reverence! The harps of myriads of cherubim and seraphim continually thrilled with His praise and the voices of all those mighty hosts were always eloquent in adoration. It may be that on set days the princes from the far-off realms, the kings, the mighty ones of His boundless realms came to the court of Christ and brought each His annual revenue. Oh, who can tell but that in the vast eternity at certain grand eras, the great bell was rung and all the mighty hosts that were created gathered together in solemn review before His throne? Who can tell the high holiday that was kept in the court of heaven when these bright spirits bowed before His throne in joy and gladness and, all united, raised their voices in shouts and hallelujahs such as mortal ear has never heard? Oh, can you tell the depths of the rivers of praise that flowed hard by the City of God? Can you imagine to yourselves the sweetness of that harmony that perpetually poured into the ears of Jesus, Messiah, King, and Eternal, equal with God His Father? No! At the thought of the glory of His kingdom, and the riches and majesty of His power our souls are spent within us, our words fail, we cannot utter the tithe of His glories!

Nor was He poor in any other sense. He that has wealth on earth and honor, too, is poor if he has not *love*. I would rather be the pauper, dependent upon charity and have love, than I would be the prince, despised and hated, whose death is looked for as a benefit. Without love, man—give him all the diamonds and pearls and gold that mortal has conceived—is poor! But Jesus was not poor in love. When He came to earth, He did not come to get our love because His soul was solitary. Oh no, His Father had a full delight in Him from all eternity! The heart of Jehovah, the first person of the Sacred Trinity, was divinely, immutably linked to Him. He was beloved of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. The three persons took a sacred complacency and delight in each other. And besides that, how was He loved by those bright spirits who had not fallen! I cannot tell what countless orders and creatures there are created who still stand fast in obedience to God—it is not possible for us to know whether there are, or not, as many races of created beings as we know there are created men on earth. We cannot tell but that in the boundless regions of space there are worlds inhabited by beings infinitely superior to us—but certain it is there were the holy angels and they loved our Savior! They stood day and night with wings outstretched, waiting for His commands, listening to the voice of His word and when He bade them fly, there was love in their countenance and joy in their hearts! They loved to serve Him and it is not all fiction that when there was war in heaven and when God

cast out the devil and his legions, then the elect angels showed their love to Him, being valiant in fight and strong in power! He needed not our love to make Him happy, He was rich enough in love without us!

Now, though a spirit from the upper world should come to tell you of the riches of Jesus, he could not do it. Gabriel, in your flights you have mounted higher than my imagination dares to follow you but you have never gained the summit of the throne of God—

“Dark with insufferable light Your skirts appear.”

Jesus, who is he that could look upon the brow of Your Majesty? Who is he that could comprehend the strength of the arm of Your might? You are God! You are infinite, and we poor finite things are lost in You; the insect of an hour cannot comprehend You; we bow before You, we adore You; You are God over all, blessed forever! But as for the comprehension of Your boundless riches, as for being able to tell Your treasures, or to reckon up Your wealth—that is impossible! All we know about the wealth of God is that the treasures of the infinite, that the riches of eternity, are all Your own—You were rich beyond all thought!

II. The Lord Jesus Christ, then, was rich. We all believe that, though none of us can truly speak it forth. Oh how surprised angels were when they were first informed that Jesus Christ, the Prince of Light and Majesty, intended to shroud Himself in clay and become a babe, and live and die! We know not how it was first mentioned to the angels, but when the rumor first began to get afloat among the sacred hosts you may imagine what strange wonderment there was! What? Is it true that He whose crown was all arrayed with stars, would lay that crown aside? What? Is it certain that He about whose shoulders was cast the purple of the universe, would become a man, dressed in a peasant’s garment? Could it be true that He who is everlasting and immortal would one day be nailed to a cross? Oh, how their wonderment increased! They desired to look into it. And when He descended from on high, they followed Him, for Jesus was “seen of angels,” and seen in a special sense. They looked upon Him in rapturous amazement, wondering what it all could mean! “He for our sakes became poor.” Do you see Him as on that day of heaven’s eclipse He did ungird His majesty? Oh, can you conceive the yet increasing wonder of the heavenly hosts when the deed was actually done? When they saw the tiara taken off, when they saw Him unbind His belt of stars and cast away His sandals of gold? Can you conceive it when He said to them, “I do not disdain the womb of the virgin. I am going down to earth to become a man”? Can you picture them as they declared they would follow Him! Yes, they followed Him as near as He would permit them. And when they came to earth, they began to sing, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.” Nor would they go away till they had made the shepherds wonder and till heaven had hung out new stars in honor of the new-born King! And now wonder, you angels, the Infinite has become an infant! He, upon whose shoulders the uni-

verse does hang, hangs at His mother's breast! He who created all things and bears up the pillars of creation has now become so weak that He must be carried by a woman! And oh, wonder you that knew Him in His riches, while you admire His poverty! Where sleeps the new-born King? Had He the best room in Caesar's palace? Has a cradle of gold been prepared for Him and pillows of down, on which to rest His head? No—where the ox fed, in the dilapidated stable, in the manger—there the Savior lies, swathed in the swaddling bands of the children of poverty! Nor there does He rest long—all of a sudden His mother must carry him to Egypt—He goes there and becomes a stranger in a strange land! When He comes back, see Him that made the worlds handle the hammer and the nails, assisting His father in the trade of a carpenter! Mark Him who has put the stars on high, and made them glisten in the night! Mark Him without one star of glory upon His brow—a simple child as other children. Yet leave for awhile the scenes of His childhood and His earlier life. See Him when He becomes a man, and now you may say indeed that for our sakes He did become poor! Never was there a poorer man than Christ. He was the prince of poverty. He was the reverse of Croesus—he might be on the top of the hill of riches, *Christ* stood in the lowest vale of poverty!

Look at His garment; it is woven from the top throughout, the garment of the poor! As for His food, He oftentimes did hunger, and always was dependent upon the charity of others for the relief of His needs! He who scattered the harvest over the broad acres of the world, sometimes had not anything to stay the pangs of hunger! He who dug the springs of the ocean, sat upon a well and said to a Samaritan woman, "Give me to drink!" He rode in no chariot. He walked His weary way, foot sore, over the flints of Galilee. He had not where to lay His head. He looked upon the fox as it hurried to its burrow and the fowl as it went to its resting place and He said, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but I, the Son of man, have not where to lay My head." He who had once been waited on by angels becomes the servant of servants, takes a towel, girds Himself and washes His disciples' feet! He who was once honored with the hallelujahs of ages, is now spit upon and despised! He who was loved by His Father and had abundance of the wealth of affection, could say, "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." Oh for words to picture the humiliation of Christ! What leagues of distance between Him that sat upon the throne, and Him that died upon the cross! Oh, who can tell the mighty chasm between yonder heights of glory and the cross of deepest woe! Trace Him, Christian—He has left you His manger to show you how God came down to man; He has bequeathed you His cross to show you how man can ascend to God; follow Him, follow Him all His journey through! Begin with Him in the wilderness of temptation. See Him fasting there and hungering, with the wild beasts around Him. Trace Him along His weary way, as the Man of Sor-

rows and acquainted with grief—He is the by-word of the drunkard. He is the song of the scorner, and He is hooted at by the malicious! Look at Him as they point their finger at Him and call Him, “drunken man and wine-bibber!” Follow Him along His *via dolorosa*, until at last you meet Him among the olives of Gethsemane. Look at Him sweating great drops of blood! Follow Him to the pavement of Gabbatha; see Him pouring out rivers of gore beneath the cruel whips of Roman soldiers! With weeping eyes follow Him to the cross of Calvary; see Him nailed there! Mark His poverty, so poor that they have stripped Him naked from head to foot, and exposed Him to the face of the sun! So poor that when He asked them for water, they gave Him vinegar to drink! So poor that His unpil- lowed head is girt with thorns in death! Oh, Son of Man, I know not which to admire most—Your height of glory, or Your depths of misery! Oh, Man slain for us, shall we not exalt You? God over all, blessed forever, shall we not give You the loudest song? “He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor.” If I had a tale to tell you this day of some king, who, out of love to some fair maiden, left his kingdom and became a peasant like herself, you would stand and wonder, and would listen to the charming tale. But when I tell of God concealing His dignity to become our Savior, your hearts are scarcely touched! Ah, my friends, we know the tale so well, we have heard it so often! And, alas, some of us tell it so badly that we cannot expect that you would be as interested in it as the subject demands! But surely, as it is said of some great works of architecture, that though they are seen every morning, there is always something fresh to wonder at—so we might say of Christ—that though we saw Him every day, we should always see fresh reason to love, and wonder, and adore. “He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.”

I have thought that there is one peculiarity about the poverty of Christ that ought not to be forgotten by us. Those who were nursed upon the lap of need feel less the woes of their condition. But I have met with others whose poverty I could pity. They were once rich. Their very dress which now hangs about them in tatters tells you that they once stood foremost in the ranks of life. You meet them among the poorest of the poor! You pity them more than those who have been born and bred to poverty because they have known something better. Among all those who are poor, I have always found the greatest amount of suffering in those who had seen better days. I can remember, even now, the look of some who have said to me when they have received assistance—and I have given it as delicately as I could, lest it should look like charity—“Ah, sir, I have known better days.” And the tears stood in his eyes and his heart was smitten at bitter recollections. The least slight to such a person, or even too unmasked a kindness, becomes like a knife cutting the heart. “I have known better days,” sounds like a knell over their joys. And verily our Lord Jesus might have said in all His sorrows, “I have known better days than these.” I think when He was tempted by the devil in the wil-

derness; it must have been hard for Him to have restrained Himself from dashing the devil into pieces! If I had been the Son of God, I think feeling as I do now, if that devil had tempted me I would have dashed him into the nethermost hell in the twinkling of an eye! And then conceive the patience our Lord must have had, standing on the pinnacle of the temple, when the devil said, "Fall down and worship me." He would not touch him, the vile deceiver, but let him do what he pleased! Oh, what might of misery and love there must have been in the Savior's heart when He was spit upon by the men He had created! And when the eyes He, Himself, had filled with vision, looked on Him with scorn and when the tongues, to which He, Himself, had given utterance, hissed and blasphemed Him! Oh, my friends, if the Savior had felt as we do, and I doubt not He did feel in some measure as we do—only by great patience He curbed Himself—I think He might have swept them all away. And, as they said, He might have come down from the cross and delivered Himself and utterly destroyed them! It was mighty patience that could bear to tread this world beneath His feet and not to crush it when it so ill-treated its Redeemer! Marvel at the patience which restrained Him. Marvel also at the poverty He must have felt, the poverty of spirit, when they rebuked Him, and He reviled them not again—when they scoffed Him, and yet He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He had seen brighter days; that made His misery more bitter and His poverty more poor!

III. Well, now we come to the third point—WHY DID THE SAVIOR COME TO DIE AND BE POOR? Hear this, you sons of Adam—the Scripture says, "For your sakes He became poor that you through His poverty might be made rich." For *your* sakes! Now, when I address you as a great congregation, you will not feel the beauty of this expression, "For your sake." Husband and wife, walking in the fear of God, let me take you by the hand and look you in the face—let me repeat those words—"For your sakes He became poor." Young man, let a brother of your own age look on you and repeat these words—"Though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor." Gray-headed believer let me look on you and say the same—"For your sake He became poor." Brothers and sisters take the words home and see if it does not melt you—"Though He was rich, yet for *my* sake He became poor." Beg for the influences of the Spirit upon that truth of God and it will make your heart devout and your spirit loving—"I am the chief of sinners, yet for *my* sake He died." Come let me hear you speak, let us bring the sinner here and let him soliloquize—"I cursed Him, I blasphemed Him and yet for *my* sake He was made poor. I scoffed at His minister, I broke His Sabbath, yet for my sake was He made poor. What? Jesus, would You die for one who was not worth Your having? Would You shed Your blood for one who would have shed Your blood, if it had been in his power? What? Would You die for one so worthless, so vile?" "Yes, yes," says Jesus, "I shed that blood for *you*." Now let the saint

speak—"I," he may say, "have professed to love Him, but how cold my love! How little have I served Him! How far have I lived from Him! I have not had sweet communion with Him as I ought to have had. When have I been spending and spent in His service? And yet, my Lord, You say, "For *your* sake I was made poor." "Yes," says Jesus, "see Me in My miseries; see Me in My agonies; see Me in My death—all these I suffered for *your* sake." Will you not love Him who loved you to *your* great excess and became poor for your sake?

That, however, is not the point to which we wish to bring you just now. The point is this, *the reason why Christ died* was "that we through His poverty might be rich." He became poor from His riches, that our poverty might become rich out of His poverty! Brothers and sisters, we now have a joyful theme before us—those who are partakers of the Savior's blood are rich! All those for whom the Savior died, having believed in His name, and given themselves to Him, are this day rich! And yet I have some of you here who cannot call a foot of land your own—you have nothing to call your own today—you know not how you will be supported through another week! You are poor, and yet if you are a child of God I know that Christ's end is answered in you. You are *rich*. No, I did not mock you when I said you were rich. I did not taunt you—you are! You are really rich—you are *rich in possessions*. You now have in your possession things more costly than gems, more valuable than gold and silver! "Silver and gold have I none," you may say, but if you can say afterwards, "Christ is all," you have outspoken all that the man can say who had piles of gold and silver! "But," you say, "I have nothing." Man, you have all things! Know you not what Paul said? He declares that "things present, and things to come, and this world, and life and death, all are yours, and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." The great machinery of providence has no wheel which does not revolve for you! The great economy of grace with all its fullness is yours. Remember that adoption, justification, sanctification—are all yours! You have everything that heart can wish in spiritual things and you have everything that is necessary for this life, for you know who has said, "Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content." You are rich—rich with true riches and not with the riches of a dream. There are times when men by night do scrape gold and silver together, like shells upon the seashore. But when they wake in the morning they find themselves penniless. But yours are everlasting treasures. Yours are solid riches! When the sun of eternity shall have melted the rich man's gold away, yours shall endure! A rich man has a *cistern* full of riches; but a poor saint has got a *fountain* of mercy. And he is the richer who has a fountain! Now, if my neighbor is a rich man, he may have as much wealth as ever he pleases—it is only a cistern full—it will soon be exhausted! But a Christian has a fountain that always flows and let him draw; draw on forever—the fountain will still keep on flowing! However large may be the stagnant pool—if it is stagnant—it is but of lit-

tle worth, but the flowing stream, though it seems to be but small, needs but time and it will have produced an immense volume of precious water! You are always to have a great pool of riches; they are always to keep on flowing to you! “Your bread shall be given you and your water shall be pure.” As old William Huntington says, “The Christian has a hand-basket portion; many a man, when his daughter marries, does not give her much; but he says to her, ‘I shall send you a sack of flour one day, and so-and-so the next day, and now and then a sum of gold. And as long as I live I will always send you something.’” He says, “She will get a great deal more than her sister who has had a thousand pounds down. That is how my God deals with me—He gives to the rich man all at once, but to me, day by day.” Ah, Egypt, you were rich when your granaries were full, but those granaries might be emptied. Israel was far richer when they could not see their granaries but only saw the manna drop from heaven, day by day. Now, Christian, that is your portion—the portion of the fountain always flowing and not of the cistern—full and soon to be emptied.

But remember, O saint, that your wealth does not all lie in your possessions just now. Remember you are rich in *promises*. Let a man be ever so poor as to the metal that he has—let him have in his possession promissory notes from rich and true men—and he says, “I have no gold in my purse but here is a note for such-and-such a sum—I know the signature, I can trust the firm—I am rich, though I have no metal in hand.” And so the Christian can say, “If I have no riches in possession, I have the promise of them—my God has said, ‘No good thing will I withhold from them who walk uprightly’—that is a promise that makes me rich! He has told me, ‘My bread shall be given me and my water shall be sure.’ I cannot doubt His signature; I know His word to be authentic. And as for His faithfulness, I would not so dishonor Him as to think He would break His promise. No, the promise is as good as the thing itself! If it is God’s promise, it is just as sure that I shall have it, as if I had it.”

But then the Christian is very rich in *reversion*. When a certain old man dies that I know of, I believe that I shall be so immensely rich that I shall dwell in a place that is paved with gold—the walls of which are built with precious stones. But, my friends, you have all got an old man to die and when he is dead, if you are followers of Jesus, you will come in for your inheritance! You know who that man is, he is very often spoken of in Scripture—may the old man in you die daily and may the new man be strengthened in you! When that old man of corruption, your old nature, shall totter into its grave, then you will come in for your property! Christians are like heirs, they have not much in their minority and they are now minors—but when they come of age, they shall have the whole of their estate. If I meet a minor, he says, “That is my property.” “You cannot sell it sir; you cannot lay hold of it.” “No,” he says, “I know I cannot, but it is mine when I am twenty-one. I shall then have complete control, but at the same time it is as really mine now as it ever will be. I have a

legal right to it and though my guardians take care of it for me it is mine, not theirs.” And now, Christian, in heaven there is a crown of gold which is yours today! It will be no more yours when you have it on your head than it is now. I remember to have heard it reported that I once spoke in metaphor and bade Christians look at all the crowns hanging in rows in heaven—very likely I did say it—but if not, I will say it now. Up, Christian, see the crowns all ready and mark your own—stand and wonder at it—see with what pearls it is dressed and how heavy it is with gold! And that is for your head, your poor aching head! Your poor tortured brain shall yet have that crown for its arraying! And see that garment! It is stiff with gems and white like snow. And that is for you! When your week-day garment shall be done with, this shall be the raiment of your everlasting Sabbath! When you have worn out this poor body, there remains for you, “A house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.” Up to the summit, Christian! And survey your inheritance and when you have surveyed it all. When you have seen your present possessions, your promised possessions, your entailed possessions—then remember that all these were bought by the poverty of your Savior! Look upon all you have and say, “Christ bought them for me.” Look on every promise and see the bloodstains on it. Yes, look, too, on the harps and crowns of heaven and read the bloody purchase! Remember, you could never have been anything but a damned sinner unless Christ had bought you! Remember if He had remained in heaven, you would forever have remained in hell! Unless He had shrouded and eclipsed His own honor, you would never have had a ray of light to shine upon you! Therefore bless His dear name, extol Him, trace every stream to the fountain, and bless Him who is the source and the fountain of everything you have! Brothers and sisters, “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich.”

IV. I have not finished. I have three things to say and I shall say them as briefly as possible.

The first is a *doctrine*. The doctrine is this—If Christ in His poverty made us rich, what will He do now that He is glorified? If the Man of Sorrows saved my soul, will the man now exalted allow it to perish? If the dying Savior availed for our salvation, should not the living, interceding Savior, abundantly secure it?—

***“He lived, He lives and sits above,
Forever interceding there!
What shall divide us from His love,
Or what shall sink us in despair?”***

If when the nail was in Your hands, O Jesus, You did rout all hell, can You be defeated now that You have grasped the scepter? If when the crown of thorns was put about Your brow You did prostrate the dragon, can You be overcome and conquered now that the acclamations of angels are ascending to You? No, my brothers and sisters, we can trust the glo-

rified Jesus—we can repose ourselves on His bosom! If He were so strong in poverty, what must He be in riches?

The next thing is a *question*. That question is a simple one. My hearer, have you been made rich by Christ's poverty? You say, "I am good enough without Christ; I need no Savior." Oh, you are like her of old who said, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, whereas, says the Lord, 'You are naked and poor and miserable.'" O you who live by good works, and think that you shall go to heaven because you are as good as others—all the merits you can ever earn yourselves are good for nothing! All that human nature ever made, turns to a blot and a curse! If those are your riches, you are not saints! But can you say this morning, my hearers, "I am by nature without anything, and God has by the power of His Spirit taught me my nothingness"?

My brother, my sister, have you taken Christ to be your all-in-all? Can you say this day, with an unfaltering tongue, "My Lord, my God, I have nothing. But You are my all"? Come, I beseech you, do not shirk the question! You are careless, heedless; answer it then, in the negative. But when you have answered it, I beseech you beware of what you have said! You are sinful, you feel it. Come, I beseech you, and lay hold on Jesus! Remember, Christ came to make those rich who have nothing of their own. My Savior is a Physician. If you can heal yourself, He will have nothing to do with you. Remember, my Savior came to clothe the naked; He will clothe you if you have not a rag of your own. But unless you let Him do it from head to foot, He will have nothing to do with you! Christ says He will never have a partner; He will do all or none. Come then, have you given up all to Christ? Have you no reliance, and trust save in the cross of Jesus? Then you have answered the question well! Be happy, be joyous! If death should surprise you the next hour, you are secure! Go on your way, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God!

And now I close with the third thing, which is an *exhortation*. sinner, do you this morning feel your poverty? Then look to Christ's poverty! O you that are today troubled on account of sin—and there are many such here—God has not let you alone—He has been plowing your heart with the sharp plowshare of conviction! You are this day saying, "What must I do to be saved?" You would give all you have to have an interest in Jesus Christ! Your soul is this day sorely broken and tormented. O sinner, if you would find salvation, you must find it in the veins of Jesus! Now wipe that tear from your eye a moment and look here. Do you see Him high where the cross rears its terrible form? There He is! Do you see Him? Mark His head. See the crown of thorns, and the beaded drops still standing on His temples? Mark His eyes. They are just closing in death! Can you see the lines of agony, so desperate in woe? Do you see His hands? See the streamlets of blood flowing down them? Hark, He is about to speak. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!" Did you hear that, sinner? Pause a moment longer, take another survey of His

person—how emaciated His body, and how sick His spirit! Look at Him. But hark, He is about to speak again—“It is finished!” What does He mean by that? He means that He has finished your salvation! Look to Him, and find salvation there! Remember, to be saved, all that God needs of a penitent is to *look to Jesus!* My life for this—if you will risk your all on Christ, you shall be saved. I will be Christ’s bondsman today to be bound forever if He breaks His promise! He has said, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” It is not your hands that will save you; it must be your eyes! Look away from those works whereby you hope to be saved; no longer strive to weave a garment that will not hide your sin; throw away that shuttle, it is only filled with cobwebs! What garment can you weave with that? Look to Him, and you are saved! Never sinner looked and was lost! Do you mark that eye there? One glance will save you; one glimpse will set you free! Do you say, “I am a guilty sinner?” Your guilt is the reason why I bid you look! Do you say “I cannot look”? Oh, may God help you to look now! Remember, Christ will not reject you, though you may reject Him. Remember now, there is the cup of mercy put to your lips by the hand of Jesus. I know if you feel your need, Satan may tempt you not to drink, but he will not prevail! You will put your lips, feebly and faintly, perhaps, to it. But oh, do but sip it, and the first draught shall give you bliss, and the deeper you shall drink, the more of heaven shall you know! Sinner, believe on Jesus Christ! Hear the whole gospel preached to you! It is written in God’s Word, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Hear me translate it—He that believes and is *immersed* shall be saved. Believe! Trust yourself on the Savior! Make a profession of your faith in baptism, and then you may rejoice in Jesus, that He has saved you!

But remember not to make a profession till you have believed; remember, baptism is nothing until you have faith. Remember, it is a farce and a falsehood until you have first believed; and afterwards it is nothing but the profession of your faith. Oh, believe that; cast yourself upon Christ, and you are saved forever! The Lord add His blessing, for the Savior’s sake. Amen.

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THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY SALVATION NO. 152

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Things that accompany Salvation.”
Hebrews 6:9.*

I AM not quite certain that my text will warrant all I shall say upon it this day if read and understood in its context. But I have taken the words rather by accommodation than otherwise and shall make use of them as a kind of heading to the discourse which I hope to be enabled to deliver. I sat myself down and I meditated on this subject—“Things that accompany Salvation.” And after some period of meditation my thoughts assumed the form of an allegory in which I hope to present them to you this morning. I compared Salvation to a rich and costly treasure which God in His infinite love and mercy had determined to send into the world. And I remembered that our Lord Jesus was so much interested in the bringing of this Salvation to this earth that He did send all that He had, and came Himself to attend and to accompany this Salvation. I then pictured to myself a great march of bright ones through this land carrying in their midst the sacred jewel of Salvation. I looked forward and I saw a mighty vanguard who already had attained the shores of eternity. I looked around Salvation and I saw it always, in every case, attended with different graces and virtues which seemed to be like troops and soldiers to guard it in the van, about its flanks and in the rear.

Before we begin, however, let us just make this caution. When the apostle speaks of virtues and of graces, he calls them “things that *accompany* Salvation,” not things which *cause* it. Our faith does not cause Salvation, nor our hope, nor our love, nor our good works. They are things which *attend* it as its guard of honor. The origin of Salvation lies alone in the sovereign will of God the Father—in the infinite efficacy of the blood of Jesus—God the Son—and in the divine influence of God the Holy Spirit. There are, however, “things that *accompany* Salvation.” Picture then, to yourselves the march of some ancient monarch through his territory. We read stories of Eastern monarchs in the olden time that seem more like romance than reality. They marched with thousands of flying banners and with all kinds of riches borne with them. Now you are to take that as the basis of my figure and suppose Salvation to be the sa-

cred treasure which is being carried through the world—with guards before and guards behind—to accompany it on its journey.

We will begin, then, with *the advance guard that has accompanied Salvation, or rather, gone before it*. We shall then come to *those who immediately precede it*. And then we shall notice *those who accompany it by its side* and conclude by noticing *the rear guard attending upon this Salvation of our God*.

I. First, then, IN THE MARCHES OF TROOPS AND ARMIES THERE ARE SOME THAT ARE OUTFRIDERS AND GO FAR AHEAD OF THE OTHER TROOPS. So in the march of “Salvation,” which have far preceded it to clear the way. I will tell you the names of these stupendous Titans who have gone before. The first is *Election*. The second is *Predestination*. The third is *Redemption* and the *Covenant* is the captain of them all. Before Salvation came into this world, Election marched in the very forefront and it had for its work the lodging of Salvation. Election went through the world and marked the houses to which Salvation should come, and the hearts in which the treasure should be deposited. Election looked through all the race of man, from Adam down to the last, and marked with sacred stamp those for whom Salvation was designed. “He must needs go through Samaria,” said Election; and Salvation must go there. Then came Predestination. Predestination did not merely mark the house, but it mapped the road in which Salvation should travel to that house. Predestination ordained every step of the great army of Salvation; it ordained the time when the sinner would be brought to Christ; the manner how he would be saved; the means that would be employed. It marked the exact hour and moment when God the Spirit would quicken the dead in sin, and when peace and pardon should be spoken through the blood of Jesus. Predestination marked the way so completely that Salvation does never overstep the bounds, and it is never at a loss for the road. In the everlasting decree of the Sovereign God, the footsteps of Mercy were every one of them ordained. As nothing in this world revolves by chance—as even the foreknown station of a rush by the river is as fixed as the station of a king—it was not meet that *Salvation* should be left to chance! And therefore God has mapped the place where it should pitch its tent, the manner of its footsteps to that tent, and the time when it should arrive there! Then came Redemption. The way was rough, and though Election had marked the house, and Predestination had mapped the road; the way was so impeded that Salvation could not travel it until it had been cleared. Forth came Redemption—it had but one weapon—that weapon was the all-victorious cross of Christ! There stood the mountains of our sins. Redemption smote them, and they split in half, and left a valley for the Lord’s redeemed to march through! There was the great gulf of God’s offended wrath, but Redemption bridged it with the cross, and so left an everlasting passage by which the armies of the Lord

may cross! Redemption has tunneled every mountain; it has dried up every sea, cut down every forest. It has leveled every high hill, and filled up the valleys so that the road of Salvation is now plain and simple. God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly!

Now this sacred advance guard carried for their banner the Everlasting Covenant. Election, Predestination and Redemption—the things that have gone before, beyond sight, are all rallied to the battle by this standard—the Covenant, the Everlasting Covenant—ordered in all things and sure! We know and believe that before the morning star startled the shades of darkness, God had covenanted with His Son that He should die and pay a ransom price. And on God the Father's part, He would give to Jesus "a number whom no man could number," who should be purchased by His blood, and through that blood should be most securely saved! Now when Election marches forward, it carries the Covenant. These are chosen in the Covenant of grace. When Predestination marches, and when it marks out the way of Salvation, it proclaims the Covenant. "He marked out the places of the people according to the tribes of Israel." And Redemption, also, pointing to the precious blood of Christ, claims Salvation for the blood-bought ones because the Covenant has decreed it to be theirs.

Now, my dear hearers, this advance guard is so far ahead that you and I cannot see them. These are true doctrines but very mysterious. They are beyond our sight, and if we wish to see Salvation, we must not stop until we see the vanguard—because they are so far off that only the eye of faith can reach them! We must have that sacred glass, that divine telescope of faith, or else we shall never have the evidence of things not seen. Let us rest certain however, that if we have Salvation, we have Election. He that believes is elected! Whoever casts himself on Christ as a guilty sinner is certainly God's chosen child. As sure as ever you believe on the Savior, and go to Him, you were predestinated to do so from all eternity, and your faith is the great mark and evidence that you are chosen of God, and precious in His esteem! Do you believe? Then Election is yours! Do you believe? Then Predestination is as surely yours as you are alive! Do you trust in Jesus alone? Then fear not, Redemption was meant for you! So then, we will not be struck with terror at that grand advance guard that has already gained the celestial hill, and has prepared the place where the elect shall forever repose upon the bosom of their God!

II. But mark, we are about to review THE ARMY THAT IMMEDIATELY PRECEDES SALVATION. And first, in the forefront of these, there marches one whose name we must pronounce with sacred awe. It is God the Holy Spirit. Before anything can be done in our salvation there must come that Third Person of the Sacred Trinity. Without Him, faith, repentance, humility, love are things quite impossible. Even the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot save until it has been applied to the heart by

God the Holy Spirit! Before we notice the grand army, then, that immediately precedes Salvation, let us be cautious that we do not forget Him who is the leader of them all. The great King, immortal, invisible, the Divine Person called the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit—it is He that quickens the soul—or else it would lie dead forever; it is He that makes it tender, or else it would never feel; it is He that imparts efficacy to the Word preached, or else it could never reach further than the ears; it is He who breaks the heart; it is He who makes it whole—He, from first to last—is the great worker of Salvation *in* us, just as Jesus Christ was the author of Salvation *for* us. O soul, by this may you know whether Salvation has come to your house—are you a partaker of the Holy Spirit? Come now, answer this question—has He ever breathed on you? Has He ever breathed *into* you? Can you say that you have been the subject of His supernatural influence? For, if not, remember except a man is born of the Spirit from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Your best exertions will be all worthless unless the Holy Spirit shall work in you to will and to do of God's good pleasure; the highest efforts of the flesh can never reach higher than the flesh—just as water of itself will never run higher than its source. You may be moral; you may be strictly upright; you may be much that is commendable, but unless you are partakers of the Holy Spirit, Salvation is as impossible to you as it is even to the lost! We must be born-again and born-again by that divine influence; or else it is all in vain! Remember, then, that the Spirit of God always accompanies Salvation.

And now, close in the rear of the adorable Spirit—follow the Thundering Legion. No sooner does God the Holy Spirit come into the soul than He brings with Him what I have called the Thundering Legion; and those of you who have been saved will not be at a loss to understand what I mean. This Thundering Legion is clad in mail; their helmets wave with horror; their speech is rough like men that come from a far country; their faces are terrible to look upon, for they are like lions, and do terribly frighten the timid. Some of the men in this Thundering Legion bear with them swords; with these swords they are to slay the sinner, for before he can be made whole, he must be spiritually killed! The sword must pierce him, and must slay all his selfishness before he can be brought to the Lord Jesus! Then another body of them carry with them axes with which they cut down the thick trees of our pride, and abase the goodly cedars of our righteousness. There are with them those that fill up the wells with stones, and break up all the cisterns of our carnal sufficiency, until we are driven to despair, having all our hopes plundered! Then come those who with bronze trumpets, or with trumpets of ram's horns—like those who once razed Jericho level with the ground—do blow a blast so shrill and dread that the sinner thinks that even the yells of hell, itself,

could not be more terrible! Then come those who with lances pierce the spirit through and through, and in the rear are the ten great guns, the artillery of the law, which perpetually fire upon the wounded spirit till it knows not what it is, nor what it does! My friend, has this Thundering Legion ever come to your house? Have they ever taken up their quarters in your heart? Rest assured these are some of the “things that accompany Salvation.” What I have said is no allegory to those who have been converted, but it may be a mystery to those who know not the Lord. Understand, then, that the first work of God the Spirit in the soul is a terrible work. Before a man can be truly converted, he must suffer great agony of spirit; all our self-righteousness must be laid level with the ground and trampled like the miry streets; our carnal hopes must every one of them be cut in pieces, and our refuges of lies must be swept away with the hail of God’s anger. The law of God will appear terrible to the sinner when he is first convicted of sin. “What have I done?” he will say. Or rather, “What have I undone? I have undone myself!” See him when God the Spirit has first convicted him of sin—you would think him mad! He is thought to be mad by his worldly companions; he weeps day and night; tears become his meat and his drink; he can scarcely sleep for the dreams of hell—and when he wakes, he thinks he already feels it! “Oh, the wrath to come, the wrath to come, the wrath to come”; that seems to be always pressing on his heart. He is like John Bunyan’s Pilgrim—he has a heavy burden on his back, and he knows not how to get rid of it! He wrings his hands and cries, “What shall I do? I am undone! I have rebelled against God, and God is angry with me!” Ah, I tell you this Thundering Legion is a terrible thing, indeed!

God be praised, when once they go out of the heart there is some joy. But while they are in the conscience of man, I defy him to eat or drink with any mirth or joy. The poor town of Man-Soul is hung with black all the time these rough soldiers are there; hideous threats and doleful forebodings are the sinner’s only company in such a case; he seeks to find a little hope and comfort in his own doings. Down comes the hammer of the law and breaks all his doings to pieces! He thinks he will rest on the couch of Indifference and Sloth; forth comes the law, ties him to the post takes its ten-thonged whip and begins to lay on him with all his might till his heart bleeds again! Then comes Conscience with its brine and washes him all over, and he is exceedingly tormented for even his bed has become a bed of spikes and thorns. This Thundering Legion always precedes Salvation; every man must feel more or less of terrors before he is converted. Some have less, some have more; but there must be some measure of this terrible law-work in the soul or else Salvation has not come to a man’s house!

Oh, Thundering Legion, you are gone! We hear their trumpets, and the dying echoes still appall us. We can remember, brothers and sisters,

those terrible days when they were in our house and in our heart. They are gone; what do we see in the rear of them? Close in the rear there follows a broken heart. Look at it—do not despise it; God never despises it: “A broken and a contrite heart O God, You will not despise.” I see how this poor broken heart is broken; it is torn to its very eye and center; it is bathed in tears; it is overwhelmed with suffering. Look at its humility! It never talks about boasting now. Mark its repentance; the sins it loved before it hates now! It speaks not about self-salvation. Hear it, as the broken heart speaks out its broken language. Hear it—“Lord have mercy upon me a sinner!” Do not fear to come and look at this broken heart; how sweetly it is perfumed! The sacred smell of a sacrifice which God approves rises from it; hear it as again it speaks—“Lord, save, or I perish!” See this poor broken heart when it is in the world, and at its business; it interrupts its business with cries like these—“Oh that—Ah, ah—would that!” And when it can get alone, it pours out its heart before God and cries—

***“Unclean, unclean and full of sin
From first to last, O Lord I’ve been!
Deceitful is my heart.***

Oh wash my soul in Jesus’ blood; forgive me all my guilt, and I will be Your servant forever and ever!”

Dear hearers, has this broken heart ever come to your house? Rest assured I am speaking God’s own truth that admits of no dispute—unless this broken heart has come within your bosom, you cannot be made partakers of Christ! The heart must first be pounded in the mortar of conviction, and beaten in pieces with the pestle of the law, or else it never can receive the divine grace of the Comforter in all its plenitude! Are you broken-hearted today? Are you sorrowful at this very hour? Be of good cheer, Salvation is not far behind! When there is once a broken heart, mercy is very near. The broken heart is the prelude of healing. He who kills will make whole; He who wounds will bind up; He who smites will cure. God is looking on you with love, and will have mercy upon you!

But who are those who follow in the rear? Another troop, another legion—but these are far different from the rest. The silken legion follows—these are not clad in steel; they have no helmets of war upon their heads; they have smiling looks, and countenances that are full of joy! No weapons of war in their hands—no thunders do they utter; they speak kind words of pity, and their hands are full of benedictions! Shall I tell you who this silken legion is? There is a troop of them who take the poor wounded heart, and wash it first in blood; they sprinkle on it the sacred blood of the Atonement; and it is amazing how the poor broken heart, though faint and sick, revives at the first drop of the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ! And when washed in blood, another of this legion

steps forward and takes it, and washes it in water—for both water and blood flowed from the Savior’s heart—

***“Let the water and the blood
From Your wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power”***

And oh, what a washing it is! The heart that was once black as the coals of hell seems white as the snow of Lebanon! When it has once been bathed in the bath of the Savior’s blood and water, oh, how pure it becomes! He who was black as the tents of Kedar becomes fair as the curtains of Solomon! Then follow those who pour oil and wine into the wounds of this poor broken heart so that where it smarted before, the wounds begin to sing! The sacred oil and wine of the precious promise is poured into every wound. And then follow those who with downy fingers bind up the heart with the sacred liniment of Promise till it seems no longer broken, but the broken heart rejoices! The whole heart sings for gladness, for God has restored its strength, and bound up all its wounds, according to His promise—“He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.” And then, since the work is not quite done, there come those who carry the King’s wardrobe; and with the things out of this rich storehouse they array the soul from head to foot! They clothe it with everything that for luster and for glory could adorn it, and make it bright as the spirits before the throne of God. And then the King’s jewelers come in and complete the whole—they array the soul with ornaments, and bedeck it with precious stones! As the Father said, “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet,” even so does this Silken Legion wash, and heal, and cleanse, and glorify the once poor broken heart! Have these ever come to your house? It is an allegory, but it is all plain to him that understands it. sinner, have you ever had the blood of Christ applied to you?—

***“Could you look and see the flowing
Of His soul’s redeeming blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He has made your peace with God?”***

Do you this hour lay your hand on the dear head of Christ? Do you confess your sin and believe that He was punished for you? Do you? Then verily salvation is yours! And has your heart ever been washed with water? Say, do you hate sin? Is your guilt all cleansed, and is the power of guilt cut away so that you do not love the ways of iniquity, nor seek to run in the paths of transgressors? Then you are an heir of heaven! And say, poor sinner, have you ever been arrayed in the robe of Jesus’ righteousness? Could you ever fondly hope that you were accepted in the Beloved? I think I see you with tears in your eyes, and hear you saying what I have sometimes sung with all my heart—

“Jesus, Your blood and righteousness

***My beauty are, my glorious dress!
 'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed
 With joy shall I lift my head.
 Bold shall I stand in that great day,
 For who anything to my charge shall lay?
 Fully absolved through Christ I am
 From sin's tremendous curse and shame."***

And now we have not yet come to a full conviction of Salvation. The Silken Legion is gone; their banners are still flying in the gale, and their trumpets of promise are still making the air glad with melody. What comes next? Now come those who are the actual attendants upon Salvation—or rather, that march in the rank immediately before it. There are four of these, called *Repentance*, *Humility*, *Prayer*, and *a tender Conscience*. Just before the full assurance of Salvation there marches *Humility*. She is of a downcast look; she is not sad but she has no high looks; she scarcely dares to lift her eyes to the place where God's honor dwells. She is often looking downwards, remembering her past estate—thinking of all the bitterness, and the guilt of her previous life. She never boasts of what God has done for her—she looks to the hole of the pit, and the miry clay from where she was dug; she knows she has been washed in the blood of the Savior, but she remembers how black she was before she was washed, and oh, she laments the past although she rejoices in the present! She feels her own weakness—she dares not stand alone—she leans on the arm of her Beloved, for she knows that she should fall to the ground unless He should constantly maintain her. Side by side with her is her sister called *Repentance*—watering the ground with tears to lay the dust before the King. Wherever she goes, she weeps—and if you ask her why, she will tell you she does not weep because of a fear of hell—that is all gone! The Silken Legion yonder, she tells you, has wiped all her fears away; but she weeps because she smote the Lord who loved her so well. She beats her breast and cries—

***"It was you, my sins, my cruel sins,
 His chief tormentors were!
 Each of my crimes became a nail,
 And unbelief the spear!"***

The more you tell her of her Salvation, the more she weeps to think she could have rebelled against such a Savior. She is confident that her sins are blotted out; she knows her Master has forgiven her; but, she will never forgive herself! Then side by side with *Repentance* is one called *Prayer*. He is a priest, and he waves in his hand a censer full of fragrant incense that the way for the King may be prepared—that wherever He marches there may be a sweet perfume. *Prayer* rises by midnight to call upon God; its waking eyes salute the rising sun that it may lift up its heart to Jehovah, and when the sun is setting, *Prayer* will not let his wheels be hidden beneath the horizon until in his chariot he has carried supplication.

Then in this company is the fourth of those immediately attending upon Salvation—a *tender Conscience*. This tender Conscience is afraid to put one foot before the other lest it should put its foot in the wrong place; poor tender Conscience; some despise him, but he is dear to the King's heart. I would to God, my brothers and sisters, you and I knew more about him! I used to know a conscience so tender—I wish I could feel it again. Then we questioned the lawfulness of every act before we committed it, and then; though it were lawful, we would stop to see if it were expedient, and if we thought it expedient, even then we would not do it, except we felt it would be abundantly honorable to the Lord our God. Every doctrine we used to study carefully lest we should believe a lie; every ordinance we examined lest we should commit idolatry; happy were the days when tender Conscience went with us! And now, my hearers, do you know anything about these four? Has *Humility* ever come to you? Has she ever abased your pride, and taught you to lie in the dust before God? Has *Repentance* ever watered the floor of your hearts with tears? Have you ever been led to weep in secret for your sins, and to bewail your iniquities? Has *Prayer* ever entered your spirit? Remember, a prayerless soul is a Christless soul! Have you learned to pray—not with the parrot's cry, but with the heart's fresh expression? Have you ever learned to pray? And lastly are you *tender of Conscience*, for unless your conscience is made tender, salvation has not met you—for these are the immediate attendants upon it.

III. And now comes SALVATION IN ALL ITS FULLNESS. The “things that accompany Salvation” make a glorious march in the forefront of it—from Election down to these precious opening buds of virtue in the sinner's heart. What a goodly array! Surely the angels do sometimes fly along in admiration, and see this long array that heralds Salvation to the heart! And now comes the precious casket set with gems and jewels. It is of God-like workmanship; no hammer was ever lifted on it; it was worked out and fashioned upon the anvil of Eternal Might, and cast in the mold of Everlasting Wisdom; but no human hand has ever defiled it, and it is set with jewels so unutterably precious, that if heaven and earth were sold, they could never buy another Salvation! And who are those that are close around it? There are three sweet sisters who always have the custody of the treasure—you know them, their names are common in Scripture—Faith, Hope and Love—the three divine sisters. These have Salvation in their hearts, and carry it about with them. *Faith*, who lays hold on Christ, and trusts all in Him; she ventures everything upon His blood and sacrifice, and has no other trust. *Hope*, who with beaming eyes looks up to Jesus Christ in glory, and expects Him to come soon; looks downward, and when she sees grim Death in her way, expects that she shall pass through with victory! And you sweet *Love*, the sweetest of the three—she whose words are music, and whose eyes are stars! Love also

looks to Christ, and is enamored of Him; she loves Him in all His offices, adores His presence, reverences His words and is prepared to bind her body to the stake and die for Him, who bound His body to the cross to die for her! Sweet Love, God has well chosen to commit to you the custody of the sacred work! Faith, Hope, and Love—say, sinner, have you these three? Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you hope that through the efficacy of His merits you shall see your Maker's face with joy? Do you love Him? Say, could you repeat after me—

***“Jesus! I love Your charming name,
‘Tis music to my ear!
Gladly would I sound it out so loud
That earth and heaven might hear!
Yes, You are precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust—
Jewels to You are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust”?***

Have you these three graces? If so, you have Salvation! Having that, you become rich to all intents of bliss, for God in the Covenant is yours! Cast your eyes forward; remember Election is yours, Predestination and Sovereign Decree are both yours. Remember the terrors of the law are past; the broken heart is mourning; the comforts of religion you have already received; the spiritual graces are already in the bud—you are an heir of immortality, and for you there is a glorious future! These are the “things that accompany Salvation.”

IV. Now you must have patience with me for just a few more minutes. I MUST BRING UP THE REAR GUARD. It is impossible that with such a van guard, divine grace should be unattended from behind! Now see those who follow Salvation. As there were fair bright cherubs that walked in front of it—you remember their names—Humility, Repentance, Prayer, and a tender Conscience—there are four that follow it, and march in solemn pomp into the sinner's heart. The first of these is Gratitude—always singing, “Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name.” And then Gratitude lays hold upon its son's hand; the name of that son is Obedience. “O my master,” says the heart, “You have done so much for me. I will obey You.”—

***“Help me to run in Your commands,
‘Tis a delightful road.
Nor let my heart, nor hands, nor feet,
Offend against my God.”***

In company with this fair grace is one called Consecration—a pure white spirit that has no earthliness; from its head to its foot it is all God's, and all gold! Hear it speak—

***“All that I am and all I have
Shall be forever Thine.
Whatever my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.***

***And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give Him all.”***

Linked to this bright one, is one with a serene and solemn face called Knowledge. “Then shall we know when we follow on to know the Lord.” Those who are saved understand mysteries, they know the love of Christ; they “know Him, whom to know is life eternal.”

Now, have you these four? They are rather the successors of Salvation than the heralds of it. “Oh yes,” the believer can say, “I trust I have Gratitude, Obedience, Consecration, and Knowledge.” I will not weary you but there are three shining ones who follow after these four, and I must not forget them, for they are the flower of them all! There is Zeal with eyes of fire, and heart of flame, a tongue that burns, a hand that never wearies, and limbs that never tire! Zeal that flies round the world with wings swifter than the lightning’s flash, and finds even then she wings too tardy for her wish. Zeal, always ready to obey; resigning up itself for Christ, jealously affected always in a good thing. This Zeal always dwells near one that is called Communion. This, surely, is the goodliest of all the train—an angel spiritualized, an angel purified and made yet more angelic, is Communion! Communion calls in secret on its God; its God in secret sees; it is conformed to the image of Jesus; it walks according to His footsteps, and lays its head perpetually on His bosom. And as a necessary consequence, on the other side of Communion, which with one hand lays hold of Zeal, is Joy—joy in the Spirit. Joy that has an eye more flashing than the world’s merriment ever gave to mortal beauty! Joy, with light foot trips over hills of sorrow singing in the roughest ways of faithfulness and love! Joy, like the nightingale, sings in the dark, and can praise God in the tempest, and shout His high praises in the storm! This is indeed a fitting cherub to be in the rear of Salvation. Do not forget these other three. They are after-works of the Spirit—Zeal, Communion, and Joy.

Now I am almost done. Just in the rear is Perseverance—final, certain, and sure! Then there follows complete Sanctification, whereby the soul is purged from every sin, and made as white and pure as God, Himself. Now we have come to the very rear of the army, but remember as there was an advance guard so far ahead that we could not see them, so there is a rear guard so far behind that we cannot *now* behold them! Let us just try to see them with the eyes of faith. We have seen the army; we have traced it from the Thundering Legion, guided by the Holy Spirit, till we have finished it by complete Sanctification. Listen! I hear the silver trumpet sound! There is a glorious array behind. A guard, far, far back is coming following the steps of the conquering heroes who have already swept our sins away! Do you not see in the first part there is one whom

men paint as a skeleton? Look at him—he is not the King’s terror. I know you, Death, I know you! Miserably men have belied you; you are no specter; your hand bears no dart; you are not gaunt and frightful. I know you, you bright cherub—you have not in your hand a dart, but a golden key that unlocks the gates of Paradise! You are *fair* to look upon; your wings are like the wings of doves—covered with silver and like yellow gold. Behold this angel, Death, and his successor, Resurrection! I see three bright things coming; one is called Confidence—look at it! It looks at Death; no fear is in its eye, no pallor on its brow. See holy Confidence march with steady steps—the cold chill stream of Death does not freeze its blood! See behind it its brother, Victory. Hear him, as he cries, “O Death, where is your sting? O Grave where is your victory?” The last word, “victory,” is drowned amidst the *shouts of angels!* These bring up the rear. Angels bear the spirits of the redeemed into the bosom of the Savior—

***“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in,
They are forever blessed.”***

And now follow everlasting songs—“Praise Him, praise Him, King of kings and Lord of lords; He has gotten Him the victory. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, world without end! Hallelujah, yet again!” Let the echoes of eternity perpetually cry, “Hallelujah!” for

“THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY YOUR SALVATION.”

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THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRONZE SERPENT NO. 153

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 27, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”
John 3:14-15.

WE are told by wise men that all languages are based upon figures—that the speech of men who are uncivilized is mainly composed of figures—and that, indeed, the language of the most civilized, when cleaved so as to bring it to its natural foundation, is based upon a set of metaphors perceived by the mind and then used in language. This much I know that when we would teach children to speak, we are accustomed to call things not exactly by the names by which they are known to us, but by some name which it represents. For instance, the kind of noise which is uttered by some animal but which in some way or other, by a species of figures, is easily understood by the child to represent the things. But it is certain that among savage nations the speech is almost entirely composed of metaphors. Hear an Indian warrior addressing the chiefs and inflaming them for war—he gathers together all the metaphors of heaven and earth to make his speech! And you will note the same thing is true even in the names which the Indian warriors have. Those of you who are acquainted with their nomenclature will remember that the strangest names are given to their great men, by way of figure and metaphor to set forth the qualities of their mind.

Now, beloved, it is the same in spiritual language as it is in natural speech. Nicodemus was but a child in divine grace. When Jesus Christ would teach him to speak concerning things of the kingdom of God, He did not talk to him in abstract words, but He gave him metaphorical words whereby he might understand the essence of the thing better than by giving him a mere abstract term. When He talked to Nicodemus, He did not say anything about sanctification. He said, “Except a man is born of water.” He did not talk anything to him about the great change of the heart. But He said, “Except a man be born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” He would not tell him much about the Spirit when He began but he said, “The wind blows where it wishes.” And when Jesus wanted to teach him faith, He did not begin by saying, “By faith we are allied to Christ and derive salvation from our living Head,” but He said—

“Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.” And so the first religious talk of converted men must always be in figures. Not the epistles of Paul—which are pure instructional teaching—but the words of Jesus must first be applied to the sinner before he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit and understands the mysteries of the kingdom. And I believe I have hit upon the reason why our Master used this figure and talked to Nicodemus with metaphor after metaphor and figure after figure—because the *root of all language* must be in figures!

And now, today, I am about to address the mass of my congregation concerning that simple subject of faith in the Lord Jesus whereby men are saved. And instead of addressing them in an instructional and doctrinal manner, I shall adopt the parable of my text and endeavor to imitate the example of my Lord in trying to make faith plain to those who are but children in grace.

Allow me, then, dear friends, to describe first, *the people in the wilderness*—the representatives of men who are sinners. Let me describe next, *the bronze serpent*—the type of Jesus Christ crucified. Let me then note what was to be *done with the bronze serpent*—it was to be lifted up. And so was Christ to be lifted up. And then let us notice *what was to be done by the people who were bitten*—they were to look at the serpent and so sinners must believe in Christ.

I. Our first figure represents MEN IN THE STATE OF SIN. And the figure is borrowed from the children of Israel in the wilderness when they were invaded by the fiery serpents. Can you imagine the horror and dismay depicted upon the countenances of the Israelites when, for the first time, they saw themselves invaded by an army of fiery flying serpents? They had stood valiantly in battle against Amalek. But these were things that trembled not at the sword. Moses had taught them the use of the bow, as it is written in the book of Jasher, but these were things against which the arrow could not prevail! They had endured weariness and thirst and hunger. The sun had sometimes smitten them by day and the frost by night. And but for God’s preservation, the hardships of the wilderness would have cut them off. All these they had endured and were familiar with, but these fiery serpents were novelties! And all new terrors are terrible from their very novelty—can you imagine how they began to tell one another of the awful visitants which they had beheld? And can you imagine how their terror spread like wildfire through the camp and before the rumor had spread the serpents were devouring them?

And now, dear friends, if we could all of us see our position in this world, we would this day feel as Israel did when they saw the serpents coming upon them! When our children are born into this world, we believe there is sin in them but it is a terrible thing for us to reflect that even if the serpent had not bitten them in birth, yet they are surrounded everywhere by innumerable evils! Can a father send his son into this wicked world with a consciousness of all the evils that will surround him

without a sense of terror? And can a Christian trust himself to walk in the midst of this ungodly and lewd generation without feeling that he is surrounded with temptations which, if he were left to himself, would be a thousand times more dangerous to him than the most destroying of serpents?

But the picture blackens! We must have deeper shades to paint it. Behold the people after they were bitten! Can you picture their writhing and contortions when the poison of the serpent had infected their veins? We are told by the old writers that these serpents, when they bit, caused vehement heat so that there was a pain throughout the body, as if a hot iron had been sent along the veins. Those who had been bitten had a great thirst. They drank incessantly and still cried for water to quench the burnings within! It was a hot fire which was lit in the fountain and which ran through every nerve and every sinew of the man. They were racked in pain and died in most fearful convulsions! Now, my brothers and sisters, we cannot say that sin *instantly* produces such an effect as this upon the men or women who are the subjects of it. But we do affirm that if we let sin alone it will develop itself in miseries far more extreme than ever the bite of the serpent could have caused! It is true the young man who quaffs the poisoned cup of intoxication knows not that there is a serpent there, for there is no serpent except in the dregs. It is sure that the woman who boasts herself of her riches and arrays herself right gaudily in her pride knows not that a serpent binds the zone of her waist! There is no serpent there that she knows of, but she shall know it when the days of her frivolity are ended! It is true he that curses God knows not that a viper has infused the poison which he speaks out against his Maker. But he shall know it in days to come! Look at a bloated drunkard—see him after years of intoxication have defaced all that was man-like in him—as he totters to his grave a poor feeble creature! The pillars of his house are shaken. His strength has failed him and that which God had meant to be His own image has become the image of incarnate misery! See the lascivious debauchee after his brief day of pleasure has ended! No, it is too loathsome for me to paint—my lips refuse to depict the miseries which our hospitals see every day—the awful loathsomeness, the accursed disease which eats up the very bones of those who indulge in sin! Fiery serpents, you are nothing when compared with fiery *lusts*. You may infuse poison into the blood, but lusts do that and do something more—they infuse damnation into the soul! When sin has had its perfect work; when its last fair conception has been brought forth and has developed itself in the dire crime and the loathsome iniquity—then we have a picture which serpent-bitten Israel would not set forth to us in all its horrors! And the shades thicken yet again. The darkness lowers and the clouds are heavier! How awful must have been the death of those who died by the serpents! There are some deaths which are sweet to think upon. The death of the late eminent preacher, Dr. Beaumont, who

died in his pulpit, was a death which all of us might envy. His released spirit, while the singing of God's praise was ascending up to heaven, left his body, and was forthwith raised to the throne of God! The death of him who served his Master sinks like a shock of corn fully ripe, or like a sun that has run its race; it is something to be noted and remembered with delight! But the death of the *sinner* who has been bitten by his lusts and has not been saved by faith in Christ—oh, how terrible! It is not in the power of mortal language to depict the horrors of the deathbed of a man who has lived without God and without Christ! I challenge all the orators that have ever lived to draw forth from their vocabulary words full enough of horror and of terror to depict the departing scene of the man who has lived at enmity with God and who dies with his conscience quickened! Some men, it is true, live in sin and take the last dregs of their infatuation before they die and sink into the pit blindfolded—without the slightest pang of horror. But other men who have had their consciences awakened die not so. Oh, the shrieks, the yells, the screams! Oh, the face of anguish, the contortions, the misery! Have you ever heard how men do shake their fists and swear they will not die and how they start forth and declare—"I cannot and I must not die, I am unprepared!" Starting back from the fiery gulf, they clutch the physician and desire him, if possible, to lengthen out the thread of their existence! Yes, many a nurse has vowed that she would never again nurse such a man, for the horrors would be with her till she died.

And now, my dear hearers, you are not dying now, but you will be dying soon. None of you have taken a lease of your lives. It is impossible for you to guarantee to yourselves existence for another hour. And if you are Godless and Christless you have in your veins the venom of that unutterable death which will make your departure doleful beyond expression! I would to God I could cut the cords of my stammering tongue so as to address you with vehemence and passion upon this subject! Men are dying every day around us—at this very hour there are thousands departing into the world of spirits! In upper chambers mourning relatives are pouring floods of tears upon their burning brows. Far away on the wild sea, where the sea gull utters the only scream over the shipwrecked mariner, down, deep, deep, deep, in the lowest valley and high upon the loftiest hills, men are now dying and dying in all the agonies I have sought to describe but have failed to do. Ah and you must die also! And will you march on heedlessly? Will you go on, step after step, singing merrily all the way and dreaming not of that which is to come? Oh, will you be like the silly bull that goes easily to the slaughter, or will you be like the lamb that licks the butcher's knife? Mad, mad, O man that you should go to eternal wrath and to the chambers of fell destruction and yet no sigh comes from your heart—no groan is uttered by your lips! You die every day but never groan till the last day of your death—which is the begin-

ning of your misery! Yes, the condition of the mass of men is just like the condition of the children of Israel when they were bitten by the serpents.

II. And now THE REMEDY. The remedy of the bitten Israelites was a bronze serpent. And the remedy for sinners is Christ crucified! “Stupid nonsense,” said some of the children of Israel when they heard that a bronze serpent lifted up on a pole was to be the means of their cure. Many of them laughed in the jollity of unbelief—“Absurd, ridiculous—who ever heard of such a thing? How can it be? A serpent of brass lifted up upon a pole to cure us of these wounds, by being looked upon? Why all the skill of the physicians cannot do it—will a glance at a bronze serpent do it? It is impossible!” This much I know, if they did not despise the bronze serpent, there are many who despise Christ crucified! Shall I tell you what they say of Him? They say of Him as they did of the bronze serpent. Some wise one said—“Why it was a serpent that did the mischief, how can a serpent *undo* it?” Yes, and men will say, “It was by man that sin and death came into the world and can a *man* be the means of our salvation?” “Ah,” says another, having the prejudice of a Jew about him, “and what a man He was! No king, no prince, no mighty conqueror. He was but a poor peasant and He died upon a cross.” Ah, so said some in the camp. They said it was only a bronze serpent, not a golden one and how could a bronze serpent be of any use to them? It would not sell for much if it were broken up. What was the use of it? And so men say of Christ! He is despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—and they hide their faces from Him because they cannot see how He is adapted for their cure.

But some will have it that the preaching of the cross not only *cannot* save, but will *increase* the evil! Old physicians tell us that brass was the most likely thing in the world to make people die the quicker. The sight of anything that is bright would have the effect of making the poison yet stronger in its effects, so that it would be death at once to look upon brass. And yet strange to say, to look at the bronze serpent saved them. “Now,” says the infidel, “I cannot see how men are to be saved from sin by the preaching of Christ. Truly, sir,” he says, “you go and tell men that though they have sinned ever so much, if they do but believe, their sins shall all be washed away? Why they will take advantage of that and they will be more wicked than ever they were! You tell men that their good works are of no use whatever, that they must rest on Christ alone! Why,” says the skeptic, “my dear fellow, it will be the destruction of all morality—instead of a cure, it will be a death. Why preach it?” Ah, the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them who perish. But unto us who are saved, it is Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God! I cannot, myself, but admit that at first sight the bronze serpent seems to be the most absurd invention, in itself, for curing those who were bitten that ever mind of man could have invented. And yet I see in the bronze serpent, when I come to study it, the highest wisdom that even God, Himself,

could develop. I grant you that the cross of Christ does, in its outward appearance seem to be the simplicity of simplicities, something which anyone might have thought of, but which would have been beneath their thought! But when you come to study and understand the marvelous scheme of God's Justice vindicated and man pardoned through the atoning blood of the cross, I say that not even the mighty intellect of God could have conceived a wiser plan than the wisdom of God displayed in Christ Jesus crucified!

But remember that as much as those who heard of the bronze serpent might have despised it, yet there was no other means of cure. And now hear me for one moment while I tell the whole story of salvation. Men, women, mothers and fathers, we are born of a sinful generation and we have ourselves increased our guilt! There is no hope for us—do what we may—we cannot save ourselves—

***“Could our zeal no respite know,
Could our tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone!”***

But brothers and sisters, Christ Jesus, God's eternal Son, came into this world and was born of the virgin Mary. He lived a doleful life of misery and at last He died a death accompanied by unutterable pangs—that was the punishment of the sins of those who, as penitents, come to Christ. If you this day so repent and put your trust in Jesus, you have in your trust and repentance a sure proof that Christ was punished for you!

III. And now, WHAT WAS TO BE DONE WITH THE BRONZE SERPENT? The text says, “Moses lifted it up,” and we read he was to lift it up upon a pole. Ah, dear friends, and Christ Jesus must be lifted up! He has been lifted up—wicked men lifted Him up when, with nails on an accursed tree, they crucified Him! God the Father has lifted Him up, for He has highly exalted Him, far above principalities and powers! But the minister's business is to lift Him up. There are some ministers who forget that their errand in the world is to lift up Christ. Suppose Moses, when God told Him to lift up the bronze serpent, had said to himself, “It is becoming in me, before I lift it up, that I should give some explanatory remarks. And instead of lifting it up before the vulgar crowd, I will initiate a proved few, so that they may understand about it. I will arrange around this serpent a few golden cloths; I will garnish it with silver tapestry so that it may not be looked upon by vulgar eyes and I will endeavor to explain it to them.” Now this is what many priestly persons in this age, and in ages past have tried to do. They think the gospels must not be preached to the poor! “The Bible” says the Church of Rome “must not be read by the vulgar crowd! How can they understand it? It is a thing too sacred for the common people to see! No, wrap up the bronze serpent! Wrap it up in a cloth; do not let it be exhibited.” “No,” say our Protestant ministers, many of them, “the Bible must be given, and we must never alter the translation of it!” There are some passages in the present translation that are so dark that no man can understand them without an explanation! “But

no,” say the divines of this age, “we will not have the Bible translated properly—the people must always put up with a faulty translation. The bronze serpent must be wrapped up because it would unsettle matters if we were to have a new translation!” “No,” say others, “we will have a new translation if necessary. But there are some parts of the truth that ought not to be preached!” I am not now misrepresenting some of my brothers in the ministry. I know they hold that some doctrines of God’s Word ought not to be preached—at least not every day. They say election is true; but they never mention it. They say predestination is no doubt a godly doctrine, but it ought to be kept from the people. It must be in their *creed*, or else they would not be sound. But in the pulpit it must not be mentioned at all. “No,” says the Church of Rome, “if we have a bronze serpent, we will put it in the sanctum where it cannot be seen and we will have the smoke of incense before it so that it shall not be plainly discerned. The pomp and ceremony and trappings of formality shall shield it from the vulgar gaze of the people. We will have it girded all round with a thousand ceremonies which will abstract the gospel and leave the people to be content with the ceremonies!” Now in these days there are great tendencies to that. The Puseyites are trying, instead of preaching the simplicity of the gospel, to give us figures. “Oh,” they say “what an elevating thing is a Gothic church! How it lifts the soul to heaven to sit in a place where there is a forest of Gothic pillars! Oh, what a sweet influence a well played organ has on the mind!” They tell us there is a kind of heavenly influence poured forth from vestments when well worn, and that to see the priest discharge his functions in a holy and reverent manner is a most excellent way of impressing souls. They will have us believe that holly at Christmas time is a most heavenly and spiritual thing! They teach us that our passions will be carried to heaven by these little sprigs of green that putting flowers, now and then, where the gas lamps should be, has a most extraordinary influence in carrying away our souls to paradise. That burning candles in the daylight is just the most splendid way in all the world of showing forth the sun of righteousness!

Now, we do not exactly fall in with their views. We believe that these places are good for children; they are not as liable to cry there, for there are more things to amuse them; but we never could see how a man—who was a man—could ever sit down to a thing so infamously namby-pamby as the religion of a Puseyite! There is nothing in it but pure nonsense and all that the gospel may not be seen! It is as if Aaron had filled his censer full of incense, and waved it before the bronze serpent, and made a great smoke so that the people could not see it. And then poor Moses tarried behind and tried to look, but none of the poor souls could see because there was the smoke before them! No, the only thing we have to do with Christ Jesus crucified is just to lift Him up and preach Him! There is many a man who can only speak in a plowman’s dialect who will wear a

bright and starry crown in heaven because he lifted Christ up and sinners saw and lived. And there is many a learned doctor who spoke with the brogue of the Egyptian—he talked with the dark and mysterious language—and after having ended his course, shall enter heaven without a solitary star in his crown, never having lifted up Christ, nor won crowns for his Master. Let each of us who are called to the solemn work of the ministry remember that we are not called to lift up doctrine, or church government or particular denominations—our business is to lift up Christ Jesus and to preach Him fully! There may be times when church government is to be discussed and peculiar doctrines are to be vindicated. God forbid that we should silence any part of His truth! But the main work of the ministry—its every day work—is exhibiting Christ and crying out to sinners, “Believe, believe, believe on Him who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

And let it be remembered that if the minister does but preach Christ plainly, that is all he has to do. If with affection and prayer he preaches Christ fully, if there were never a soul saved—which I believe would be impossible—he would have done his work and his Master would say, “Well done.” I have gone away from this hall after preaching upon different doctrines and though many have complimented me, foolishly, I have said to myself, “I can but groan that I had such a subject at all.” And at another time, when I have been faltering in my delivery and committed a thousand blunders in my speech, I have gone away as happy as a prince, because I have said, “I did preach Christ.” There was enough for sinners to be saved by. And if all the papers in the world should abuse me and all the men in the world should say, “Cry him down,” I will still live and still breathe as long as I can feel in myself, “I have preached to sinners and Christ has been preached to them so as they could understand and lay hold on Him and be saved.”

IV. And now, dear friends, I have almost concluded but I have come to that part of the discourse which needs most of power. WHAT WAS ISRAEL TO DO? What are convicted sinners to do? The Israelites were to *look*. The convicted sinner must believe! Do you picture Moses with his reverend head standing erect and boldly crying out with all his might—“Look, look, look!” Do you see him, as with his right hand he grasps the pole and lifts it up and marches with it through the camp? He is like a great standard-bearer, pointing with his finger and speaking with hands and eyes and lips and feet and every part of the body—as he passionately bids poor bitten Israel to look! You can, perhaps, conceive the scene as men roll over one another. And the dying and almost dead behold the bronze serpent and begin to live. Now note, there may be some in the camp who would not look. They obstinately shut their eyes and when the pole was brought near them they would not look. Perhaps it was through unbelief. They said, “What is the use of it? It can do us no good!” There is the wretch, the pole is before him and yet he will not look. Well, what will

become of him? Oh, the death-pangs are upon him! See how death is twitching him! How his flesh seems to writhe in agony! He has shut his eyes with all the force and passion he can command, lest they should be opened on that bronze serpent and he should live! Ah, my hearers, I have such a one here today. I have many here who will not come to Christ that they may be saved—men who, when the gospel is preached to them resist it, despise it and reject it! Though the reception of the gospel is all of divine grace, yet the rejection of it is all of man. And I have some here who have often been touched in their conscience. They have often been moved to believe, but they have been desperately set on mischief and they would not come to Christ. Ah, sinner, you little know how direful your doom shall be! You may this day tell me you do not believe in the Savior. You may turn away your ears from the warning and say, “What need to make so great a noise about it? I would rather die than believe, for I do not think that Christ can save! What good is there in it?” Ah, sir, you may reject *me*—but remember there is a greater preacher than I am coming to you soon. He with a skeleton arm and bony finger and cold speech—he will freeze and yet convict! It is one called Death! Look me in the face today and tell me I preach you a lie—you can do that easily! Look Death in the face tomorrow and tell him that—and you will find it harder work! Yes and if you have the foolhardiness to do that, you will not look at the face of the Great Judge when He shall sit upon the throne! Tell Him that His gospel was not true! Frightened and alarmed, you shall rush here and there to hide yourselves from the face of Him that sits upon the throne.

Perhaps there were some in the camp who said they would look by-and-by. “Oh,” they said, “there is no need to look *now*—the venom has not yet worked its effects—we are not yet dead. Just a little longer!” And before they uttered the last word they were stiff and cold as clay! How many do the same? They will not be religious yet—another day, another hour—they believe they can be pious when they like, which is a fallacy—and therefore they will postpone the matter as long as they may. How many have postponed the day of salvation until the day of damnation has come before they had repented? Oh, how many have said, “A little sleep, a little folding of the hands” and they have been like men on ship-board, when the ship was foundering, who would not escape while they might, but still tarried on deck? At last the sea swallowed them and they went down alive into the depths. Take heed of procrastination! Delays are dangerous and some delays are damnable! Look here, look here to Christ bleeding on the cross! Look now, for the Spirit says, “*Today*, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the day of provocation.”

I doubt not there were some there who tried physicians—“Look at the bronze serpent?” they said. “Not we! Doctor, come here, bring your balsam. Can you not take the caustic and burn out this poison from my arm and then pour in some cordial that will save me? Physician, have

you no antidote that might cool my blood? Ah, I laugh at that bronze serpent. I will not look at it. I trust to your skill, O learned physician!" And how many now do the same? They say "I will not believe in Christ. I will try and do better, I will reform *myself*. I will attend to all the *ceremonies* of the church. Can I not help myself and so improve myself that I shall have no need of Jesus?" Ah, you may try—you may lay that flattering unction to your souls and film the ulcerous wound—but all the while dark corruption shall sleep within and shall at last break out in sore flames upon you. Then you shall have no time to attempt a cure but shall be swept away—not to the hospital of mercy, but like the leper outside the city—you shall be cast away from hope of blessedness!

It may be there were some who were so busy looking at their sores that they did not think of looking at the serpent. Poor creatures, they lay in their misery and kept looking first at that wound on the foot and then at that one on the hand and crying over their sores and never looked at the serpent! Scores and hundreds perish in that way. "Oh," says the sinner, "I have been so sinful!" Man, what has that to do with it? Christ is all meritorious; look at Him. "No, no," says another, "I cannot look at Christ. Oh, sir, you do not know what crimes I have committed. I have been a drunk; I have been a swearer; I have been a whoremonger—how can I be saved!" My dear man, woman, your wounds have nothing to do with it—it is just Christ on the cross! If any poor creature, bitten by the serpent, had said to me—"Now it is no good my looking there. See how often I have been bitten? There is a huge serpent twisting round my loins, there is another devouring my hand—how can I live?" I would say to him, "My dear fellow, do not take any notice whether you have got one serpent or 50 serpents, one bite or 50 bites. All you have to do is *look*. You have nothing to do with these bites except that you have to feel them and perish by them unless you look! Just look straight to Christ." And now you chief of sinners, believe in the Lord Jesus! And be your sins ever so many, He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! And yet how many perish through many delusions, with the gospel before their very eyes, lifted up on the pole so plainly that we wonder they do not see it?

And now I must tell you one or two sweet things for the encouragement of the poor sinner. Oh, you who are guilty this morning and know that you are so, let me say to you, "Look to Christ!" Remember the bronze serpent was lifted up so that everyone in the camp who was bitten might live. And now Christ is lifted up to you that "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." sinner, the devil says you are shut out. Tell him that "Whoever" shuts out none! Oh that precious word, "Whoever"! Poor soul, I see you clutch at it and say, "Then, sir, if I believe, He will not cast me away?" I see the harlot in all her guilt bemoaning her iniquity. She says it is impossible that Christ should save her. But she hears it said, "Whoever," and she looks and lives! Remem-

ber, it mattered not how old they were, nor how much bitten they were, or whereabouts in the camp they lived. They did but look and live! And now you that have grown gray in iniquity, whose hair might rather be black than white if they showed forth your character—for it has been blackened by years of vice—remember there is the same Christ for big sinners as for little sinners! The same Christ for gray heads as for babies! The same Christ for poor as for rich! The same Christ for chimney sweeps as for monarchs—the same Christ for prostitutes as for saints—“WHOEVER!” I use broad words that I may take a broad range and sweep the whole universe of sinners—*whoever looks to Christ shall live*. And remember it does not say that if they looked but little they should not live. Perhaps there were some of them so bitten that their eyelids were swollen and they could scarcely see. Old Christopher Ness says, “There may have been some of them that had so little sight that they could but squint from one eye.” He says, in his strange language, “If they did but dart a little glance at the bronze serpent, they lived.” And you who say you cannot believe—if God gives you only half a grain of faith; that will carry you to heaven! If you can only say, “O Lord, I would believe, help You my unbelief!” If you can but put out your hand with Simon Peter, and say “Lord save, or I perish,” it is enough! If you can only pray that poor publican’s prayer—“God be merciful to me a sinner,” that will do! And if you cannot sing with some of the old experienced saints—

***“My name from the palms of His hands,
Eternity cannot erase.”***

Remember it is quite enough, if you can only sing—

***“I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try!
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die!”***

And now poor soul I have almost done. But I cannot let you go. I see you with the tears in your eyes. I hear you confessing your guilt, and bemoaning your sin. I bid you look to my Master and live! Be not afraid to try my Lord and Master. I know what your bashfulness is. I have felt the same and thought He never would save me. Come soul, you are in secret now with yourself—for though there are thousands around you—you think I am speaking alone to you. And so I am. My brother, my sister—you are weeping today on account of sin—look to Jesus! And for your encouragement note these three things. Note first that Jesus Christ was put on the cross on purpose for you to look at. The only reason why He died was that poor sinners might look at Him and be saved! Now, my dear brothers and sisters, if that was Christ’s purpose in being hung on the tree; you need not think you may not do it. If God sends a river and sends it for us to drink of, will you disappoint Him in not drinking? No, rather you will say, “Did He wish me to drink it? Then I will drink it.” Now, Jesus hung on the cross on purpose to be looked at. Look at Him, look at Him and live! Remember again for your encouragement, He asks

you to look. He *invites* you to believe, He has sent His minister this day, even to *command* you to do it. He has said to me, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Now I need not simply say that my Master’s door is wide open for you; I will say something more—He has told me to ask you to come in! Wisdom cries aloud! She utters her voice in the streets, she invites you—she says, “My oxen and my fatlings are killed; all things are ready; come to the supper!” Yes, my Master has given instructions to His Holy Spirit that if men will not come of themselves, He should compel them to come in that His house may be filled! Then, poor sinner, you must be welcome—He will have enough sinners to fill His table! And if He has made you feel your sinnership—come and welcome, sinner, come! And my last encouragement is this—Come to my Master and try Him because He promises to save you. The promises of Jesus Christ are all of them as good as oaths! They never fail. He says—“Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” Now, if I had here a man who declared himself to be the vilest wretch on earth, I would say to him—Young man, I am very fond of proving the truthfulness of God’s promises. Now God says if you believe, you shall not perish; my dear friend, when a common sinner tries, and it does not fail, it is some proof of its truthfulness—but you are an extraordinary sinner. Now, you extraordinary sinner, venture yourself on this promise—He says you shall not perish—come and try Him! And remember, God must undeify Himself and cease to be true before He can ever damn a sinner who has believed in Christ! Come risk it, you who are so laden with sin that you stagger under your burden! Fall down on the simple promise, “He is able to save to the uttermost.” Just cast yourself wholly on Christ, and if you are not saved, God’s book is a lie, and God Himself has broken His truth! But that cannot be! Come and try it! “Whoever believes in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

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FAST-DAY SERVICE

NO. 154-155

**HELD AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE, SYDENHAM,
ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.**

*Being the day appointed by Proclamation for a Solemn Fast, Humiliation,
and Prayer before Almighty God: in order to obtain Pardon of our Sins,
and for imploring His Blessing and Assistance on our Arms
for the Restoration of Tranquility in India.*

BRIEF INVOCATION

O GOD, the God of heaven and of earth, we do this day pay You reverence, and meekly bow our heads in adoration before Your awful throne. We are the creatures of Your hand. You have made us and not we ourselves. It is but just and right that we should pay You our adoration. O God, we are met together in a vast congregation for a purpose which demands all the power of piety and all the strength of prayer. Send down Your Spirit upon Your servant, that he, while trembling in weakness, may be made strong to preach Your word, to lead forth this people in holy prayer and to help them in that humiliation for which this day is set apart. Come, O God, we beseech You. We bow our hearts before You. Instead of sackcloth and ashes, give us true repentance and hearts meekly reverent. Instead of the outward guise, to which some pay their only homage, give us the *inward Spirit*. And may we really pray, really humble ourselves and really tremble before the Most High God. Sanctify this service! Make it useful unto us and honorable to Yourself. And O You dread Supreme, unto You shall be the glory and the honor, world without end. Amen.

Let us now praise God by singing the first Hymn. I shall read it through and then, perhaps, you will be kind enough to sing it through—

***“BEFORE Jehovah’s awful throne,
You nations bow with sacred joy.
Know that the Lord is God alone
He can create and He destroy.
His sovereign power, without our aid,
Made us of clay and formed us men!
And when like wandering sheep, we strayed,
He brought us to His fold again.
We are His people, we His care,
Our souls and all our mortal frame.
What lasting honors shall we bear,
Almighty Maker to Your name?
We’ll crowd Your gates with thankful songs,
High as the heavens our voices raise.
And earth with her ten thousand tongues,
Shall fill Your courts with sounding praise.
Wide as the world is Your command,
Vast as eternity Your love,
Firm as a rock Your truth must stand,
When rolling years shall cease to move.”***

EXPOSITION
DANIEL 9:1-19.

1. *“In the first year of Darius the Son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;*

2. *“In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.*

3. *“And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.*

4. *“And I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him and to them that keep His commandments;*

5. *“We have sinned and have committed iniquity and have done wickedly and have rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and from Your judgments.*

6. *“Neither have we hearkened unto Your servants the prophets, which spoke Your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.*

7. *“O Lord, righteousness belongs unto You, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day. To the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near and that are far off, through all the countries where You have driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against You.*

8. *“O Lord, to us belongs confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against You.*

9. *“To the Lord OUR God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.”*

There is the first bright star which shines in the midst of the darkness of our sins. God is merciful. He is just—as just as if He were not merciful! He is merciful—as merciful as if He were not just and in very deed more merciful than if He were too lenient. My brothers and sisters, we should rejoice that we have not this day to address the gods of the heathens. You have not today to bow down before the thundering Jove. You need not come before implacable deities who delight in the blood of their creatures, or rather, of the creatures whom it is pretended that they have made.

Our God delights in mercy and in the deliverance of Britain from its ills. God will be as much pleased as Britain. Yes, when Britain shall have forgotten it and only the pages of history shall record His mercies, God will still remember what He did for us in this day of our straits and our difficulties. As to the hope that He will help us it is a certainty. There is no fear that when we unite in prayer God will refuse to hear! It is as sure as that there is a God, that God will hear us. And if we ask Him aright, the day shall come when the world shall see what Britain’s God has done and how He has heard her cry and answered the voice of her supplications!

10. *“Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets.*

11. *“Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, even by departing, that they might not obey Your voice. Therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.*

12. *“And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil—for under this whole heaven has not been done as has been done upon Jerusalem.”*

13. *“As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us—yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth.”*

14. *“Therefore has the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us—for the Lord our God is righteous in all His works which He does—for we obeyed not His voice.”*

15. *“And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have gotten You renown, as at this day. We have sinned, we have done wickedly.”*

The prophet in his prayer pleads what God has done for them as the reason why He should make bare His arm. He tells how God delivered Israel out of Egypt. And he therefore prays that God would deliver them from their present trouble. And, my brothers and sisters, not Israel itself could boast a nobler history than we, measuring it by God’s bounties. We have not yet forgotten an armada scattered before the breath of heaven, scattered upon the angry deep as a trophy of what God can do to protect His favored Isle. We have not yet forgotten a fifth of November, wherein God discovered many plots that were formed against our religion and our commonwealth. We have not yet lost the old men, whose tales of even the victories in war are still a frequent story. We remember how God swept before our armies the man who thought to make the world his dominion, who designed to cast his shoe over Britain and make it a dependency of his kingdom. God worked for us. He worked with us. And He will continue to do so! He has not left His people and He will not leave us, but He will be with us even to the end. Cradle of liberty! Refuge of distress! Storms may rage around you, but not upon you; nor shall all the wrath and fury of men destroy you—for God has pitched His tabernacle in your midst, and His saints are the salt in the midst of you!

16. *“O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I beseech You, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain—because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all that are about us.”*

17. *“Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Your servant and his supplications, and cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake.”*

18. *“O my God, incline Your ear and hear. Open Your eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name—for we do not present our supplications before You for our righteousnesses but for Your great mercies.”*

19. *“O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, hearken and do. Defer not, for Your own sake, O my God—for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”*

And now for a few moments let us endeavor to pray—

PRAYER.

“OUR Father, which are in heaven,” we will be brief but we will be earnest if You will help us. We have a case to spread before You this day. We will tell our story, and we will pray that You would forgive the

weakness of the words in which it shall be delivered, and hear us, for Jesus' sake. O Father, You have smitten this, our land, not in itself but in one of its dependencies. You have allowed a mutinous spirit to break out in our armies, and You have allowed men who know You not, who fear neither God nor man, to do deeds for which earth may well blush and for which we, as men, desire to cover our faces before You. O Lord God, You could not bear the sin of Sodom. We are sure You cannot endure the sin which has been committed in India. You did rain hell out of heaven upon the cities of the plain. The cities of India are not less vile than they, for they have committed lust and cruelty and have much sinned against the Lord. Remember this, O God of heaven.

But, O Lord our God, we are not here to be the accusers of our fellow man. We are here to pray that You would remove the scourge which this great wickedness has brought upon us. Look down from heaven, O God, and behold this day the slaughtered thousands of our countrymen. Behold the wives, the daughters of Britain, violated, defiled! Behold her sons, cut in pieces and tormented in a manner which earth has not beheld before. O God, free us, we beseech You, from this awful scourge! Give strength to our soldiers to execute upon the criminals the sentence which justice dictates. And then, by Your strong arm, and by Your terrible might, we ask You to prevent a repetition of so fearful an outrage.

We pray You, remember this day the widow and the fatherless children. Think You of those who are this day distressed even to the uttermost. Guide the hearts of this great multitude that they may liberally give, and this day bestow of their substance to their poor destitute brethren. Remember especially our soldiers, now fighting in that land. God, shield them! Be a cover from the heat! Will You be pleased to mitigate all the rigors of the climate for them? Lead them on to battle. Cheer their hearts—bid them remember that they are not merely warriors but executioners. And may they go with steady tramp to the battle, believing that God wills it that they should utterly destroy the enemy, who have not only defied Britain, but thus defiled themselves among men.

But, O Lord, it is ours this day to humble ourselves before You. We are a sinful nation. We confess the sins of our governors and our own particular iniquities. For all our rebellions and transgressions, O God have mercy upon us! We plead the blood of Jesus! Help everyone of us to repent of sin, to fly to Christ for refuge and grant that each one of us may thus hide ourselves in the rock, till the calamity is over, knowing that God will not desert them that put their trust in Jesus. Your servant is overwhelmed this day. His heart is melted like wax in Your midst. He knows not how to pray! Yet Lord if You can hear a groaning heart which cannot utter itself in words, hear his strong impassioned cry in which the people join. Lord save us! Lord arise and bless us! And let the might of Your arm and the majesty of Your strength be now revealed in the midst of this land, and throughout those countries which are in our dominion. God save the Queen! A thousand blessings on her much-loved head! God preserve our country! May every movement that promotes liberty and progress be accelerated, and may everything be done in our midst which can shield us from the discontent of the masses, and can protect the masses from the oppression of the few. Bless England, O our God. "Shine, mighty God, on Your Britain." And make her still glorious Britain, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." Lord accept

our confessions. Hear our prayers, and answer us by Your Holy Spirit! Help Your servant to preach to us. And all the glory shall be unto You, O Father, to You, O Son, and You, O Holy Spirit; world without end. Amen and Amen.

Let us now sing the second hymn. It is made up of verses selected from different Psalms which I thought to be appropriate to the occasion—

***“OUR God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.
Under the shadow of Your throne,
Your saints have dwelt secure.
Sufficient is Your arm alone,
And our defense is sure.
Our foes insult us but our hope
In Your compassion lies.
This thought shall bear our spirits up,
That God will not despise.
In vain the sons of Satan boast
Of armies in array!
When God has first despised their host,
They fall an easy prey.
Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come
Be You our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.”***

Hoping to receive help from God’s Holy Spirit, I shall now proceed to address you from a part of the 9th verse of the 6th chapter of Micah—

SERMON
“Hear you the rod, and who has appointed it.”
Micah 6:9.

THIS world is not the place of punishment for sin. Not *the* place. It may sometimes be a place but not usually. It is very customary among religious people to talk of every accident which happens to men in the indulgence of sin, as if it were a *judgment*. The upsetting of a boat upon a river on a Sunday is assuredly understood to be a judgment for the sin of Sabbath-breaking. In the accidental fall of a house, in which persons were engaged in any unlawful occupation, the inference is at once drawn that the house fell because they were wicked. Now, however, some religionists may hope to impress the people by such childish stories as those, I, for one, deny them all! I believe what my Master says is true when He declared, concerning the men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, that they were not sinners above all the sinners that were upon the face of the earth. They were sinners—there is no doubt about it—but the falling of the wall was not occasioned by their sin, nor was their premature death the consequence of their excessive wickedness. Let me, however, guard this declaration, for there are many who carry this doctrine to an extreme. Because God does not usually visit each

particular offense in this life upon the transgressor, men are apt to deny altogether the doctrine of judgments. But here *they* are mistaken. I feel persuaded that there *are* such things as *national* judgments, *national* chastisements for *national* sins—great blows from the rod of God—which every wise man must acknowledge to be either a punishment for sin committed, or a call to warn us to a sense of the consequences of sins—leading us, by God's grace, to humble ourselves and repent of our sin.

O, my friends, what a rod is that which has just fallen upon our country! My poor words will fall infinitely short of the fearful tale of misery and woe which must be told before you can know how smartly God has smitten and how sternly He has chided us! We have today to mourn over revolted subjects, for today a part of our fellow countrymen are in open arms against our government. That, of itself, were a heavy blow. Happily the government of this land is so constituted that we know little of revolutions except by name. But the horrors of anarchy, the terrors of a government shaken to its foundations are so great that should I preach alone upon that subject, you might hear the rod and cry aloud beneath its strokes. But this is as but the letting forth of water. A flood succeeds. The men who have revolted were our subjects and I challenge the entire world to deny what I am going to say—they were rightly our subjects. Whatever the inhabitants of India might be (and undoubtedly that people have grave faults to find with us), the Sepoys had voluntarily given themselves up to our dominion. They had themselves taken oaths of faithfulness to Her Majesty and their officers, and they have no cause to murmur if they are made to endure the sentence uttered by a government of which they were the sworn and willing supporters. They were always petted, always rocked upon the knee of favoritism. Their revolt is not the revolt of a nation. If India had revolted, history might perhaps have taught us that she had patriots in her midst who were delivering her from a tyrannical nation. But in the present case, it is only men who are impelled by a lust and ambition for an empire who have risen against us. And, ah, my friends, what crimes they have committed! Not today shall I detail their acts of debauchery, bloodshed and worse than bestiality—this tongue will not venture to utter what they have dared to do! You would rise from your seats and hiss me from the pulpit which I now occupy if I should but dare to hint at the crimes which have been done by them—not in secret but in the very streets of their cities!

And, again, equally as painful, we have now rebels to be executed. I look upon every gallows as a fearful chastisement. I regard every gibbet as being a dreadful visitation upon our land. And I think that whenever the arm of the ruler is outstretched for the punishment of death, it must always be looked upon by the country as a serious affliction to it. Just as the father thinks it a high affliction to chastise his child, so should a country always esteem it to be a visitation when they have to punish, especially with the punishment of death. Now, these men must be punished! Both heaven and earth demand it! I am no soldier, I love not war. I do not believe that this is a war at all, in the proper sense of the term. We are not fighting with enemies. Our troops are going forth against revolted *subjects*—against men who, by their crimes, by their murder and by other unmentionable sins, have incurred the punishment of death. And as the arrest of a murderer by authority of the law is not war, so the arrest of Indian Sepoys and their utter destruction is not

war—it is what earth demands and what I believe God sanctions! But it is a horrible necessity. It is a dreadful thing to think of taking away the lives of our fellow subjects. We must look upon *it* as being an *affliction*—and, today, among the other evils that we bemoan, we must bemoan this—that the sword must be taken out of its sheath to cut off our fellow subjects by their thousands. The rod, *the rod*, THE ROD has indeed fallen heavily! No mortal tongue can tell the anguish it has caused, nor perhaps can we yet dream where its ill effects shall end.

Remember, however, the words of my text. It is a rod. But it is an *appointed* rod. Every deed that has been done against us has been appointed by God. God is most fully to be cleared from the sin of it but it is undoubtedly true that He has overruled and permitted it. The rod was ordained of God. I myself see God everywhere. I believe that “The foreknown station of a rush by the river is as fixed as the station of a king and the chaff from the hand of the winnowing as steered as the stars in their courses.” And I see God in this war. The wheels of providence may revolve in a mysterious manner but I am certain that wisdom is the axle upon which they revolve—so that at last it shall be seen that God, who ordained the rod—only permitted it that greater good might follow and that His name might be exalted through the earth. The *sin* is man’s own deed, but the affliction that we suffer through it, God has ordained. Let us bow before it and let us now hearken to the exhortation of the text—“Hear you the rod and Him that has appointed it.”

I shall have your attention while as briefly as I can, I endeavor to bid you hear this rod of God.

First, let me remark it would have been as well if we had heard this rod BEFORE IT FELL upon us. God’s rod by the wise man may be heard before it smites. He that understands God’s moral government knows that sin carries punishment in its heart. A wise man believing revelation could have prophesied that God would visit us. The sins of the government of India have been black and deep. He who has heard the shrieks of tormented natives, who has heard the well-provoked cursing of dethroned princes, might have prophesied that it would not be long before God would unsheathe His sword to avenge the oppressed. With regard to India itself, I am no apologist for our dominion there. With regard to the Sepoys, they are our voluntary subjects—they deserve the utmost rigor of the law. From their own oath they were our subjects. And if they have revolted, let them suffer the punishment of their treason. But had it been the Indian *nation* that had revolted, I would have prayed God that they might have been brought under British rule again for the sake of civilization. But I would not have preached a crusade against them, lest haply we would have been smiting patriots who were but delivering an oppressed country. My brothers and sisters, I say it would have been as well if the rod had been heard before it fell. If in the midst of sin the Indian government had paused and endeavored to undo the evil, it would have been well for them—if instead of following the policy of creed, they had followed the policy of right, they might have looked for divine support. They never ought to have tolerated the religion of the Hindus at all. I believe myself (for it in no way infringes the law of right) entitled to my religion. But if my religion consisted in bestiality, infanticide, and murder, I would have no right to my religion unless I were prepared to be hanged for it.

Now, the religion of the Hindus is neither more nor less than a mass of the rankest filth that imagination could ever have conceived! The gods they worship are not entitled to the least atom of respect. Had they given a decent character to their demons, we might have tolerated their idolatry. But when their worship necessitates everything that is evil, not religion, but morality must put it down! I do not believe that in this land there ever ought to have been any toleration for the Agapemone, a place of lust and abomination, where sin is committed before which God's sun might blush. Any religion that does not infringe upon morality is beyond the force of legislature. But when once religious teachers teach immorality, and when once a religion compels men to sin, down with it! No toleration to it! It is impossible that there should be any quarter strewn to vice, even though embellished with the name of religion. If it is any man's religion to blow my brains out, I shall not tolerate it! If it is any man's religion to meet me as the Thugs do, and murder me, I shall not tolerate his Thugism. If it is a man's religion to commit bestial acts in public, I for one would touch his conscience, but believing that he has none, I would touch him somewhere else. Such a religion as the religion of the Hindu, the Indian Government was bound, as in the sight of God, to put down with all the strength of their hands! But they have allowed it—in some cases they have even aided and abetted their filthy deeds! And now God visits them. And, I repeat, it would have been well if they had heard the rod before it fell. They might have perhaps avoided all this evil, and certainly they would have avoided the remorse which some of them must feel in having thus brought it upon themselves.

But it *has* fallen. The rod has smitten. The scourge has plowed deep furrows upon India's back. What then? "Hear you the rod" that has fallen! Now, it is an opinion published by authority—and who am I, that I should dispute the great authorities of England?—that one part of the reason for this dreadful visitation is the sin of the people of England, themselves! We are exhorted this day to humble ourselves for sin. Granting that as being a truth—and mark, I am not the originator of it, it is in the Proclamation—who am I, that I should dispute such a high authority as that? The Proclamation states it is our sin that has brought this on us. So they say—what, then, are our sins? Now, I will be honest with you—as honest as I can and I will try and tell you. What are the most glaring sins for which—if it is true that God is now punishing us—what are the most likely sins to have brought this visitation upon us?

First, there are sins in the community that never ought to have been allowed. O Britain, weep for deeds which your governors have not yet strength of mind to stop! We have long been allowing the infamous nuisances of Holywell Street. Bless God they are pretty well done for! But now what do I see every night? If I return from preaching in the country—in the Haymarket and in Regent Street, what stares me before my eyes? If there is a crime for which God will visit England, it is the sin of allowing infamy to walk before our eyes thus publicly! I do not know whose fault it is—some say it is the fault of the police—it is somebody's fault—that I do know and against that somebody I do now most solemnly protest. It is a most fearful thing that those who are honest and moral cannot walk the streets without being insulted by sin in the robes of the harlot. My voice perhaps this day may reach some who have power to repeat this protest powerfully and successfully. I see before me gentlemen who are the representatives of the press. I believe they will do

their duty in that matter. And if they will sting as some of them can sting, right sharply, they perhaps may be able to sting a little virtue into some of our governors, and that will be a good thing. But I do protest that this has been one of the causes why God has visited us, if indeed our sins have brought this evil upon us—as I verily believe. Look you, too, men and brethren, at some of those amusements of yours in which you are likely to indulge. God forbid I should deny you those of your amusements which are innocent, but I must maintain that they should be always moral. When we know that lords and ladies of the land have sat in playhouses and listened to plays that were a long way from decent, it is time that some voice should be lifted up against them! These are glaring sins! I am not now raking for private faults. We have had these things before our eyes and there have been some who have dared to protest against them long ago! I say these sins of the community, in part, have brought the rod upon us!

But, my friends, I am inclined to think that our *class sins* are the most grievous. Behold this day the sins of the rich. How are the poor oppressed! How are the needy downtrodden! In many a place the average wage of men is far below their value to their masters. In this age there is many a great man who looks upon his fellows as only stepping stones to wealth. He builds a factory as he would make a cauldron. He is about to make a brew for his own wealth. “Pitch him in,” he is only a poor clerk! He can live on a hundred a year. *Put him in!* There is a poor time-keeper—he has a large family. It does not matter—a man can be had for less—*in with him!* Here are the tens, the hundreds and the thousands that must do the work. *Put them in!* Heap the fire, boil the cauldron, stir them up. Never mind their cries. The cry of the laborers kept back may go up to heaven—it does not matter, the millions in gold are safe! The law of supply and demand is with us—who is he that would interfere? Who shall dare to prevent the grinding of the faces of the poor? Cotton lords and great masters ought to have power to do what they like with the people—ought they not? Ah, but you great men of the earth, there is a God and that God has said He executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed! And yet the seamstress in her attic, and yet the tailor in his den, and yet the artisan in his crowded factory, and yet the servants who earn your wealth—who have to groan under your oppression—shall get the ear of God, and He will visit you! “Hear you the rod.” It is for this the rod falls on you!

Mark, again, the sins of merchants. Was there ever an age when the merchants of England had more fallen from their integrity? The mass of them, I believe, are honest to the core. But I do not know who among them are so. We can trust none in these times. You heap up your companies and you delude your myriads. You gather the money of fools. You scatter it to the winds of heaven and when the poor call upon you, you tell them it is gone—but where? O, England, you were once true, upright, and honest! Men could not rightly call you, then, “Perfidious Albion.” But now, O Britain, alas for you! Unless you recover yourself, who can trust you? God will visit the nation for this, and it shall be seen that this alone is one of the things which God would have us hear when we hear the rod!

There are many of you who are poor. I saw you smile when I spoke to the rich. I will have at you, also. If we are to humble ourselves this day as a nation, you also have cause to be humbled! Ah, my God, what

multitudes there are of men who deserve but little of their employers, for they are eye-servers, men-pleasers and do not with singleness of heart serve the Lord! Were men better workmen, their masters would be better. There are hundreds of you who are here today who are the best hands in all the world to prop up walls when you ought to be busy at your own work—who, when your time is bought and paid for, steal it for something else! And how many there are in what are called the lower ranks—and God forgive the man who invented that word, for we are none of us lower than the other before the Judge of all the earth—how many are there who do not know what it is to look up to God and say, “Though He has made me a servant, I will discharge my duty and I will serve my master and serve my God with all my might.” Many are the sins of the poor! Humble yourselves with the rich! Bow your heads and weep for your iniquities, for these things God does visit us and you should hear the rod.

It is impossible for me today to enter into all the sins of stinginess, of deceit, of bigotry, of lasciviousness, of carnality, of pride, of covetousness, and of laziness which infest this land! I have tried to indicate some of the chief, and I pray God humble us for all for them!

And now, “Hear you the rod.” O church of God, the rod has fallen and *the church* ought to hear it! I am afraid that it is the *church* that has been the greatest sinner! Do I mean by “the church” that established by law? No, I mean the Christian church as a body! *We*, I believe, have been remiss in our duty. For many and many a year pulpits never condescended to men of low estate. Our ministers were great and haughty. They understood the polish of rhetoric; they had all the grandeur of logic; to the people they were blind guides and dumb dogs—for the people knew not what they said—neither did they regard them! The churches themselves slumbered. They wrapped themselves in a shroud of orthodoxy and they slept right on. And while Satan was devouring the world and taking his prey, the church sat still and said, “Who is my neighbor?” and did not awaken herself to serve her God. I hope that we have already seen the beginning of a revival. The last year has seen more preaching than any year since the days of the apostles! We are stirring in ragged schools and in various efforts for doing good. But still the church is only half awake. I fear she still slumbers. O church of God! Awake! Awake! Awake, for verily the rod has fallen for *your* sake. “Hear you the rod and Him that has appointed it.” We have had many rods, friends. We have had many great afflictions and we did bear them for a time.

And now I close my sermon by saying, “Hear you the rod, when the rod SHALL AGAIN BE STILL.” We trust that in a little while our soldiers will carve us out peace and victory with their triumphant swords. We trust that perhaps this very day a great fight is being fought and a great victory being won. I seem to hear today the shout of the triumphant warrior. I think I hear the trumpet of victory even now. The hour of prayer is often the hour of deliverance! At any rate, we hope that before long this black cloud will be blown away and then I fear you will all forget it. You will pray *today*—will you pray when victory comes? You will buy some fireworks, will you not? That is how you will thank God! You had a victory over a potent enemy and peace was established—your votive offerings consisted of rockets and illuminations—grand offerings to the Dread Supreme! If a heathen were here, he would say, “Their God is the

God of humiliation, not the God of victory—their God is a God of trouble, certainly not the God of blessings, for they forget Him when they receive deliverance.” I remember, when last time the cholera swept through your streets—you hurried to your churches and you prayed! Terror sat upon your countenances and many of you cried aloud for deliverance. And in God’s kindness, it came. And what did you do? Alas for your piety—it passed away as the morning cloud and the early dew—it will be so again! It is but as the lashing of the water. It is struck but it soon recovers itself and all marks are erased. It is so with this land. I fear it is so with each of us to a degree. How often have you and I been laid upon our beds with cholera, or with fever, or with some other disease which threatened to take us away! We prayed. We sent for the minister. We devoted ourselves to God. We vowed if He would spare us, we would live better. Here you are, my hearer, just what you were before your sickness! You have forgotten your vow. But *God has not forgotten it*. Your resolutions were filed in heaven and in the day of judgment God shall take them forth and say, “Here is one solemn covenant broken. Here is another vow forgotten, another resolution made in sickness broken after recovery!” I think that today will be a most solemn mockery if our humiliation ends today. With some of you it will not even begin today and, therefore, it will not end, for it is not begun! But the mass who will pray today—will they pray in a week? Not they! They will go their way to heap again the fire wood of their sins upon the pile of vengeance and stand by and weep because the fire is burning, the fire which they themselves have kindled!

Oh, my hearers permit me to charge home to your hearts. And would God that He would make the charge of my language against your consciences as heavy as the charge of British soldiers against the enemy! How many of you have been awakened, convicted of sin, of righteousness and of judgment? How many times have you vowed you would repent? How many times have you declared that you did hear the rod and that you would turn to God? And yet you have been liars to the Almighty! You have defrauded the Most High! And while the bill is due, it still stands dishonored. Tremble! God may yet smite you! And if today you are despisers of Christ—remember you have no guarantee that you will be in this world another hour! You may, before this sun is set, stand before your Maker’s bar. What then? What then? What then? To perish *forever* is no light matter. To be cast into the flames of hell is no little consideration. “Turn you, turn you, turn you. Why will you die, O house of Israel!” Repent! “The time of your ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” And remember that when He *gives* you repentance and faith, He has appended the blessing to them. “Jesus Christ of the seed of David” was nailed to a cross. He died that we might *not* die and to every believer, heaven’s gate is open, to every penitent the path to paradise is *free*. Sinner! Do you believe? If so, Christ has blotted out your sin. Be happy! Soul! Do you repent? You are safe. God has helped you to repent and inasmuch as He has done it, He has proved that He loves you!

Oh, if I might but have some souls won to Christ today, what would I give? What is all this great gathering to me? It is an extra labor; that is all. For this I do not labor; God is my witness, I sought you not. Never once have I said a thing to court a smile from any man. When God first sent me to the ministry, He bade me fear no man, and I have not yet met

the man to whom I have feared to tell of God's gospel. Nor have I sought to please you! Nor have I sought to gather you here. I would preach the gospel—may God give me some souls as my reward! And if but one poor sinner shall look to Jesus, clap your wings, you angels! Enough is done, for God is honored!

I have finished my sermon but I want to make an appeal to you to give generously.

Lives there a man in England who will this day refuse his help to those of his countrymen who have suffered? No! There does not live such a man—not such a Briton! Is there a miserable heretic without a heart who will—when God has given him enough—shut up his heart of compassion against those whose sons and daughters have been murdered, and who themselves have escaped as by the skin of their *teeth*? No! I will not slander you by such a supposition. I cannot think that I have such a monster here! When the box shall pass round, give—give as you can afford. If it is a penny, let the working man give. You who are rich must not give pennies, however. Many a man has said, “There is my mite.” He was worth a hundred thousand pounds, and it was not a mite at all. If he had given a thousand it would only have been a mite to him! Give as you can afford. May God be pleased to grant a generous spirit.

The following Chorus was then sung—
**“GLORY, honor, praise and power,
 Be unto the Lamb forever.
 Jesus Christ is our Redeemer!
 Hallelujah. Amen.”**

After which, the benediction having been pronounced, the service terminated.

There were upwards of 24,000 persons present at this service. And the amount collected towards the Indian Relief Fund amounted to nearly £500, of which £25 was given by Miss Nightingale. The Crystal Palace Company contributed £200 in addition—making a total of nearly £725.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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FEAR NOT

NO. 156

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 4, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you,
says the LORD, and your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”
Isaiah 41:14.***

I SHALL speak this morning to those who are discouraged, depressed in spirit and sorely troubled in the Christian life. There are certain nights of exceedingly great darkness through which the spirit has to grope in much pain and misery and during which much of the comfort of the Word is particularly needed. Those seasons occur in this manner—frequently they occur at the outset of a religious life. A young man, deeply impressed under the ministry, has been led to feel the weight of sin. He trusts he has been led to look for salvation to the Christ who is preached in the gospel. In the young ardor of his spirit he devotes himself wholly to Christ—with the most solemn vows he dedicates body, soul, time, talents—all that he has, to the great work of serving God. He thinks it easy to fulfill his vow. He does not count the cost! He reckons it will be easy to forsake merry companions, to renounce old established habits and to become a Christian. Alas, before many days he realizes his mistake! If he did not reckon without his head, he certainly reckoned without his heart—for his evil heart of unbelief has deceived him. He knew not how hard would be the struggle and how desperate the wrestling between his old evil nature and the new-born principle of divine grace within him! He finds it to be like the rending off of right arms to give up old and cherished habits. He discovers it to be painful to renounce his former pursuits—as painful as it would be to pluck out his right eye! He sits down, then, and he says, “If this is the trouble at the outset, what may I expect as I proceed? Oh my soul, you were too fast in dedicating yourself to God! You have undertaken a warfare which your prowess can never accomplish. You have started on a journey for which your strength is not adequate. Let me again return unto the world!” And if the Spirit says, “No, you cannot,” then the poor soul sits itself down in deep misery and cries, “I cannot go back and I cannot go forward! What must I do? I am exceedingly discouraged because of the way.” The same

feeling often overcomes the most valiant Christian veteran. He who has been long experienced in the things of the divine Life will sometimes be overtaken with a dark night and a stormy tempest. So dark will be the night that he will not know his right hand from his left and so horrible the tempest that he cannot hear the sweet words of his Master say, "Fear not, I am with you." Periodical tornadoes and hurricanes will sweep over the Christian. He will be subjected to as many trials of his spirit as trials in his flesh. This much I know, if it is not so with all of you, it is so with me. I have to speak today to myself. And while I shall be endeavoring to encourage those who are distressed and down-hearted, I shall be preaching, I trust, to myself, for I need something which shall cheer *my heart*—why, I cannot tell—from where I do not know, but I have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me! My soul is cast down within me, I feel as if I had rather die than live. All that God has done by me seems to be forgotten and my spirit flags and my courage breaks down with the thought of that which is to come. I need your prayers! I need God's Holy Spirit! I felt that I could not preach today unless I should preach in such a way as to encourage you and to encourage myself in the good work and labor of the Lord Jesus Christ!

What a precious promise to the young Christian, or to the old Christian attacked by lowness of spirits and distress of mind! "Fear not, you worm Jacob and you men of Israel. I will help you, says the LORD and your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Christian brothers and sisters, there are some in this congregation—I hope many—who have solemnly devoted themselves to the cause and service of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let them hear, then, the preparation which is necessary for this service set forth in the words of our text. First, *before we can do any great things for Christ there must be a sense of weakness*—"Worm Jacob." Secondly, *there must be trust in promised strength*. And thirdly, *there must be fear removed by that promise*—"Fear not, for I will help you."

I. In the first place, the first qualification for serving God with any amount of success and for doing God's work well and triumphantly is A SENSE OF OUR OWN WEAKNESS. When God's warrior marches forth to battle with plumed helmet and with mail about his loins, strong in his own majesty—when he says, "I know that I shall conquer, my own right arm and my mighty sword shall get unto me the victory"—defeat is not far distant! God will not go forth with that man who goes forth in his own strength! He who reckons on victory having first calculated his own might, has reckoned wrongly, for, "It is not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts." They who go forth to fight boasting that they can do it, shall return with their banners trailed in the dust

and with their armor stained with defeat, for God will not go forth with the man who goes forth in his own strength! God has said it—men must serve Him—they must serve Him in His way and they must serve Him in His strength, too, or He will never accept their service. That which man does, unaided by divine strength, God will never accept. The mere fruits of the earth He casts away. He will only have the seed of which was sown from heaven, sprinkled in the heart and harvested by the sun of divine grace. There must be a consciousness of weakness before there can be any victory.

I think I hear many saying today, “Well, sir, if that is a qualification for doing much, I have it to a very large extent.” Well, do not marvel, do not wonder! Depend on this—God will empty out all that you have before He will ever put His own into you! He will first empty all your granaries before He will fill them with the finest of the wheat. The river of God is full of water, but there is not one drop of it that takes its rise in earthly springs. God will have no strength used in His battles but the strength which He Himself imparts—and I would not have you who are now distressed in the least, discouraged by it. Your emptiness is but the *preparation* for your being filled and your casting down is but the making ready for your lifting up!

Are there others of you who would almost desire to be cast down that they might be prepared to serve God? Let me tell you, then, how you can promote in yourself a sense of your own nothingness. The text addresses us as worms. Now, the mere rationalist, the man who boasts of the dignity of human nature, will never subscribe his name to such a title as this. “Worm?” he says, “I am no worm! I am a man—a man is the most glorious thing that God has made! I am not going to be called a worm. I am a man—I can do anything! I need not your revelations. They may be fit for children, for men of childish minds who only learn by believing—I am a man! I can think out truth. I will make my own Bible, fashion my own ladder and mount on it to heaven, if there is a heaven, or make a heaven if that is all and dwell in it myself.” Not so, however, he who is wise and understands. He knows that he is a worm and he knows it in this way—

First, he knows it by *contemplation*. He who thinks will always think himself little. Men who have no brains are always great men. But those who think must think their pride down—if God is with them in their thinking. Lift up, now, your eyes—behold the heavens, the work of God’s fingers! Behold the sun guided in his daily march. Go forth at midnight and behold the heavens—consider the stars and the moon. Look upon these works of God’s hands and if you are men of sense and your souls are attuned to the high music of the spheres, you will say, “What is man

that You are mindful of him and the son of man that You visit him?" My God! When I survey the boundless fields of ether and see those ponderous orbs rolling therein—when I consider how vast are Your dominions—so wide that an angel's wing might flap to all eternity and never reach a boundary—I marvel that You should look on insects so obscure as man! I have taken to myself the microscope and seen the short-lived things upon the leaf and I have called them small. I will not call him so again—compared with me he is great! If I put myself into comparison with God, I am so little that I shrink into nothingness when I behold the Almightyness of Jehovah—so little, that the difference between the animalcule and man dwindles into nothing when compared with the infinite chasm between God and man! Let your mind rove upon the great doctrines of the Godhead. Consider the existence of God from before the foundations of the world. Behold Him who IS and WAS and IS TO COME, the Almighty! Let your soul comprehend as much as it can of the Infinite and grasp as much as possible of the Eternal and I am sure if you have minds at all, they will shrink with awe! The tall archangel bows himself before his Master's throne, and we shall cast ourselves into the lowest dust when we feel what base *nothings*, what insignificant *specks* we are when compared with our all-adorable Creator! Labor, my soul, to know your nothingness and learn it by *contemplating God's greatness!*

Again—if you want to know your own nothingness consider *what you are in suffering*. I was thinking the other evening how small a matter it must be with God to cast any man into the most unutterable agony. We are well and in good spirits. We know not why, but it seems as if God's finger had touched one nerve—but one poor nerve and we are so miserable that we could sit down and weep! We do not know how to bear ourselves. But half an hour ago we could have "smiled at Satan's rage and faced a frowning world." And God does but put His hand on our hearts and just let one of the strings run loose and what discord there is in our spirits! We are annoyed at the slightest matter. We wish to be continually alone. The very promises yield us no comfort. Our days are nights and our nights are black as Gehenna. We know not how to endure ourselves. How easily, then, can God cast us into misery! O man, what a little thing you are, if so little a thing can overthrow you! You have heard men talk big words when they have been prosperous. Did you ever hear them talk so when they were in deep distress and great anguish and sorrow? No, then they say, "Am I a sea or a whale that You set a watch upon me? What am I, that You should visit me every morning and chasten me every night? Let me alone, until I swallow down my spittle. Why am I sorely vexed? What am I, that You should make me a target for Your arrows

and a target for your wrath? Spare me, O my God, for I am less than nothing! I am but a shadow that passes away and declines. Oh deal not harshly with Your servant, for Your mercies' sake." Great sorrow will always make a man think little of himself—if God blesses it to him.

Again—if you would know your own weakness, *try some great labor for Christ*. I can understand how some minister, who preaches to his 150 on a Sabbath, and regards himself as having a large congregation, should be very precise about the color of his tie, and about the respect that is paid to his dignity in his little church. I can well comprehend how he should be as big as my Lord Archbishop—because he does nothing! He has nothing at all to try him. But I cannot imagine Martin Luther standing before the Diet at Worms, being proud because he had to do such a deed as that. I cannot conceive John Calvin, in his incessant labors for Christ, leading on the Reformation and teaching the truth of God with power saying to himself, "Lo, this great Babylon that I have built." I can suppose the man that has nothing to do and that is doing nothing sitting down in devout complacency with his own adorable self. But I cannot conceive, if you nerve yourselves to great labors but what you will have to say, "Lord, what a worm am I that You should call me to such work as this!" Turn, if you please, to the history of all men who have done great deeds for God and you will find them saying, "I marvel that God would use *me* thus!" "This day my mind was exceedingly cast down," says one of them, "for God had called me to a great labor and I never felt so much of my own insufficiency as I did today." Says another, "I have tomorrow to do such-and-such an eminent service for my Master. I can say that when I was in my low estate, I was often exalted above measure, but this day my God has cast me into the lowest depths at the recollection of the work for which He has engaged me." Go and do something, some of you, and I will be bound to say it will be the means of pricking that fair bubble of your pride and letting some of it blow away! If you would understand what is meant by being a worm, go and do what the 15th verse says the worm should do—go and thrash the mountains and beat them small—make the hills as chaff fanned by the wind, scatter them and then rejoice in God! And if you can do that—

***"The more God's glories strike your eyes,
The humbler you will lie."***

"Devout contemplation, sharp suffering, hard labor—all these will teach us what little creatures we are! Oh, may God by all means and every means keep us understanding and knowing that we are nothing more and nothing better than worms!"

How easy it is, my brothers and sisters, for you and I to fly up! How hard to stay down! That demon of pride was born with us and it will not die one hour before us! It is so woven into the very warp and woof of our nature that till we are wrapped in our grave clothes we shall never hear the last of it. If any man tells me that he is humble, I know him to be profoundly proud. And if any man will not acknowledge this truth of God—that he is desperately inclined to self-exaltation—let him know that his denial of this truth is the best proof of it! Do you know what the sweetest flattery in the world is? It is that flattery that Caesar's courtiers of old gave to him when they said Caesar hated flattery, being then most highly flattered! We do not hate flattery, any of us. We all like it. We do not like it if it is *labeled* flattery, but we like it if it is given in a little underhand fashion. We all love praise—

***“The proud to gain it toils on toils endure,
The modest shun it, but to make it sure.”***

We all love it, every soul of us and it is right and meet that we should all bow before God and acknowledge that pride which is woven into our nature, and ask Him to teach us what little things we are, that we may claim this promise—“Fear not, you worm Jacob.”

II. Now the next point. Before devoting ourselves to Christ, or doing any great labor for the Savior, it is necessary THERE SHOULD BE TRUST IN THE PROMISED STRENGTH. “I will help you, says the LORD, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” It is a certain fact that though men are worms, they do what worms never could do. Although men are nothing, they accomplish deeds which need even the power of the Infinite to rival them! How shall we account for this? Certainly it is not the *worms!* It must be some secret energy which gives them might. The mystery is unraveled in the text. “I will help you, says the LORD.” In ancient history there is a story told of a valiant captain whose banner was always foremost in the fight. His sword was dreaded by his enemies, for it was the herald of slaughter and of victory. His monarch once demanded of him that he should send this potent sword to him to be examined. The monarch took the sword, quietly examined it, and sent it back with this message—“I see nothing amazing in the sword. I cannot understand why any man should be afraid of it.” The captain sent back in the most respectful manner a message of this kind—“Your Majesty has been pleased to examine the sword, but I did not send the arm that wielded it. If you had examined that and the heart that guided the arm, you would have understood the mystery.” And now we look at men and see what men have done and we say, “I cannot understand this—how was it done?” Why, we are only seeing the sword! If we could see the heart of In-

finite Love that guided that man in his onward course, we would not wonder that he, as God's sword, gained the victory! Now the Christian may remember that little though he is, God is with him. God will help him and that right early. Brothers and sisters, I like a man who, when he begins to do anything, is afraid of himself and says, "It is of no use. I cannot do it." Let him alone—he will do it! He is all right. The man who says, "Oh there is nothing to it, I can do it," will break down to a dead certainty! But let him begin by saying, "I know what I am and I feel confident I cannot do it unless I have something more given to me than I feel today"—that man will come back with flying banners, the trumpets proclaiming that he has been victorious! But it must be because he puts reliance upon *help promised*. Now, Christian, I see you this morning ready to run away from the battle. You have been so dispirited this last week through many adverse circumstances, that you are ready to give up your religion! Now, man, here is a brother comrade who is passing through the same thing. He comes here this morning, half inclined to run off to Tarshishlike Jonah did of old. Only he could not find a boat, or else he might have sailed away. And he has come here to pat you on the shoulder and say, "Brother, do not let us play deserters, after all; let us up to arms, and still fight for our Master, for the promise says, 'I will help you.'" brothers and sisters, what an all-sufficient promise that is—"I will help you." Why, it matters not what God has given us to do—if He helps us, we can do it! Give me God to help me, and I will split the world in halves and sliver it till it shall be smaller than the dust of the threshing floor! Yes, and if God is with me, this breath could blow whole worlds about, as the child blows a bubble. There is no telling what man can do when God is with him. Give God to a man and he can do all things! Put God into a man's arm and he may have only the jawbone of an ass to fight with, but he will lay the Philistines in heaps—put God into a man's hand, and he may have a giant to deal with, and nothing but a sling and a stone—but he will lodge the stone in the giant's brow before long! Put God into a man's eyes, and he will flash defiance on kings and princes. Put God into a man's lips, and he will speak right honestly, though his death should be the wages of his speech! There is no fear in a man who has God with him. He is all-sufficient! There is nothing beyond his power. And, my brethren, what an opportune help God's is! God's help always comes in at the right time. We are often making a fuss because God does not help us when we do not need to be helped.

"Oh!" says one, "I do not think that I could die for Christ. I feel I could not. I wish I felt that I had strength enough to die." Well, you just won't feel that because you are not going to die and God will not give you

strength to die with to lay up till the dying time comes! Wait till you are dying and then He will give you strength to die! “Oh!” says another, “I wish I felt as strong in prayer as So-and-So.” But you do not need so much strength in prayer, and you shall not have it; you shall have what you need, and you shall have it when you need it—not a minute before! Ah, I have often cried to God and desired that I might feel happy before I began to preach—that I might feel I could preach to the people. I could never get it at all. And yet sometimes God has been pleased to cheer me as I have gone along and given me strength that has been equal to my day! So it must be with you. God will come in when you need Him—not one minute before, nor yet one minute later. “I will help you.” I will help you when you need help! And oh, brothers and sisters, what an ennobling thing it is to be helped by God! To be helped by a fellow man is no disgrace but it is no honor. But to be helped by God—what an honor that is! When the Christian prophet preaches his Master’s word, and feels that he has girded about his loins the belt of the Almighty to strengthen him for his day’s work—that he may not fear the people—what a noble being he is then! When the Christian philanthropist goes into the prison, in the midst of reeking disease and death and feels that God has put the wings of the angel over him to shield him in the day of pestilence, how it ennobles and honors him to have God with him! To have His strength girding his loins and nerving his arm is just the highest thing to which man can attain. I thought but yesterday, “Oh, if I were a cherub, I would stand with wings outstretched and I would bless God for opportunities for serving Him.” But I thought within myself, “I have an opportunity of serving God but I am too weak for it. O my God, I wish You had not put the load on me.” And then it struck me, “Do the cherubim and seraphim ever say that? Do they ever for a moment say, ‘I have not strength enough to do it!’” No! If a cherub had a work to do which was beyond his might, he would meekly bow his head, and say, “My Lord, I fly, I fly! He that commanded the deed will enable me to perform it.” And so must the Christian say, “My God, do You command? It is enough—’tis done. You never did send us to a warfare in our own strength, and You will never do so. You will help us and be with us to the end.” Before we can do much, then, *we must know our own weakness and believe God’s strength.*

III. And now comes the last point, upon which I shall be brief. We must then, LABOR TO GET RID, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, OF FEAR. The prophet says, “Fear not.” You are a worm but do not fear. God will help you—why should you fear? Let us labor to get rid of fear when we are certain we are serving our Master. And let these be our reasons—

Get rid of fear *because fear is painful*. How it torments the spirit! When the Christian trusts, he is happy. When he doubts, he is miserable. When the believer looks to his Master and relies upon Him, he can sing. When he doubts his Master, he can only groan. What miserable wretches the most faithful Christians are when they once begin doubting and fearing! It is a trade I never like to meddle with because it never pays the expenses and never brings in any profit—the trade of doubting. Why, the soul is broken in pieces, lanced, pricked with knives, dissolved, racked, pained—it knows not how to exist when it gives way to fear! Up, Christian! You are of a sorrowful countenance—up and chase your fears away! Why would you be forever groaning in your dungeon? Why should the Giant Despair forever beat you with his crab-tree club? Up! Drive him away! Touch the key of the promises! Be of good cheer! Fear never helped you yet, and it never will!

Fear, too, is *weakening*. Make a man afraid—he will flee at his own shadow. Make a man brave and he will stand before an army and overcome them! He will never do much good in the world who is afraid of men. The fear of God brings blessings, but the fear of men brings a snare, and such a snare that many feet have been tripped! No man shall be faithful to God if he is fearful of man. No man shall find his arm sufficient for him and his might equal to his emergencies unless he can confidently believe and quietly wait. We must not fear, for fear is weakening.

Again—we must not fear, for fear *dishonors God*. Doubt the Eternal? Distrust the Omnipotent? Oh, traitorous fear! Do you think that the arm which piled the heavens and sustains the pillars of the earth shall ever be palsied? Shall the brow which eternal ages have rolled over, without scathing it, at last be furrowed by old age? What? Shall the Eternal fail you? Shall the faithful Promiser break His oath? You dishonor God, O unbelief! Get out of here! God is too wise to err, too good to be unkind—leave off doubting Him, and begin to trust Him—for in so doing you will put a crown on His head—but in doubting Him you do trample His crown beneath your feet.

And lastly, doubt not the Lord, O Christian, for in so doing *you do lower yourself*. The more you believe, the greater you are. But the more you doubt the less you become. It was said of the world's conqueror, that when he was sick, he cried like a child. "Give me some drink," cried one, like a sick girl—it was said to his dishonor! And is it not to the dishonor of a Christian who lives in secret on his God and professes to trust alone in Him, that he cannot trust Him? That a little child will overcome his faith? Oh, poor little boat that is upset by a raindrop! O poor puny Christian who is overcome by every straw—that stumbles at every stone! Then,

Christian brothers and sisters behave like men and women! It is childish to doubt; it is manhood's glory to trust. Plant your feet upon the immoveable Rock of Ages; lift your eyes to heaven. Scorn the world—never be a coward. Bend your fist in the world's face, and bid defiance to it and hell, and you are a man and noble! But crouch and cringe and dread and doubt and you have lost your Christian dignity, and are no longer what you should be. You do not honor God. "Fear not, you worm Jacob. I will help you, says the LORD." Then why should you fear?

I feel that my voice fails me and with it my very powers of thought too, and therefore I can only turn to my comrades in arms, in the good war of Christ, and say to them—brothers and sisters, you and I can do nothing of ourselves—we are poor puny things. But let us attempt great things—for God is with us! Let us dare great things, for God will not leave us! Remember what He has done and remember, what He has done of old, He will do again. Remember David the shepherd boy. Remember well Shamgar, with his ox-goad. Forget not the jawbone of the ass, and the stone from the sling. If these worked wonders, why should not we? If little things have done great things, let us try to do great things also! You know not, you atoms, but that your destiny is sublime. Try and make it so by faith. And the least of you may be mighty through the strength of God. Oh for divine grace to trust God, and there is no telling what you can do! Worms, you are nothing, but you have eaten princes! Worms, you are nothing, but you have devoured the roots of cedars, and laid them level with the earth! Worms, you are nothing, but you have piled rocks in the deep, deep sea, and wrecked mighty navies! Worms, you have eaten through the keel of the proudest ship that ever sailed the ocean. If you have done this yourselves, what cannot we do? Your strength lies in your mouths—our strength lies in ours, too! We will use our mouths in prayer and in constant adoration, and we shall yet conquer, for God is with us, and victory is sure—

"You trembling souls! Dismiss your fears!

Let mercy be your theme.

Mercy, which, like a river,

Flows in one continued stream.

Fear not the powers of earth and hell—

GOD will these powers restrain,

His mighty arm their rage repel,

And make their efforts vain!

Fear not the want of outward good—

He will for His provide,

Grant them supplies of daily food,

And all they need beside!

Fear not that He will ever forsake

*Or leave His work undone
He's faithful to His promises—
And faithful to His Son!
Fear not the terrors of the grave,
Or death's tremendous sting—
He will from endless wrath preserve—
To endless glory bring!"*

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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YOUR REDEEMER

NO. 157

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, OCTOBER 4, 1857,
 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“And your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”
Isaiah 41:14.

AND why does it say, “And your Redeemer”? What was the use of appending the Redeemer’s name to this precious exhortation? By God’s help it shall be the business of this evening to show why there is a peculiar blessedness in the fact that God has not only said, “I will help you, says the LORD,” but has added, “And your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”

You will please notice that it looks as if this were a repetition by three different persons. Israel was cast down. And Jehovah, for that is the first word—you will notice that the word, “LORD,” is in capitals, and should be translated “Jehovah”—says to His poor, tried, desponding servant, “I will help you.” No sooner is that uttered—and we think we shall not be straining the text if we surmise that God the Holy Spirit, the Holy One of Israel, also adds His solemn affidavit and declares by oath and covenant, “I will help you.” Does not this, we say, look somewhat like repetition? Was it not sufficient that Jehovah the Father should declare that He would help His people? Why did the other persons of the divine Trinity unite in this solemn declaration? We think we shall be able, if God shall help us, to show great usefulness therein, especially dwelling tonight upon that word, “your Redeemer,” and marking how the repetition of the word by our Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, adds a peculiar blessedness to the exhortation—“Fear not, you worm Jacob.”

First, I think this was added *for amplification*; secondly, *for sweetness*; thirdly, *for confirmation*.

I. First, when it says, “And your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,” it was added FOR AMPLIFICATION. There are some preachers from whom you will never learn anything—not because they do not say much which is instructive but because they just mention the instructive thought once. And then they immediately pass on to another thought—never expanding upon that thought, either—but immediately passing on, almost without connection to a third! They cast forth, as it were, bare thoughts, without opening them up and explaining them to the people. Such

preachers are generally complained of as being very unprofitable to their hearers. “Why,” said the hearer, “it made no impression upon me. It was good, but there was so much of it that I could not remember it. I had nothing to bring away.” Other preachers, on the other hand, follow a better method. Having given one idea, they endeavor to amplify it so that their hearers, if they are not able to receive the idea in the abstract, at least are able to lay hold upon some of its points when they come to the amplification of it. Now, God, the great Author of the book, God, the great Preacher of the truth by His prophets—when He would preach it and when He would write it, so amplifies a fact, so extends a truth and enlarges upon a doctrine, that He says, “I will help you, says Jehovah.” That means Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “Oh, but,” said God, “My people will forget that unless I amplify the thought. So I will even break it up—I will remind them of My Trinity. They understand my Unity; I will bid them remember that there are Three in the One, though these Three are One.” And He adds, “Your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” Jehovah—Redeemer—Holy One of Israel—three persons all included, indeed, in the word, *Jehovah*, but very likely to be forgotten unless they had been distinctly enumerated!

Now, brothers and sisters, allow your thoughts for a moment to enlarge upon the fact that the promise contained in this verse, “Fear not, I will help you,” (*I will help you*), is a promise from Three Divine Persons. Here is Jehovah, the everlasting Father, saying, “I will help you.” “Mine are the ages—before the ages began, when there were no worlds, when nothing had been created, from everlasting I am your God. I am the God of election, the God of the decree, the God of the covenant; by My strength I did set fast the mountains; by My skill I laid the pillars of the earth, and the beams of the firmament of heaven. I spread out the skies as a curtain and as a tent for man to dwell in. I the Lord made all these things. ‘I will help you.’” Then comes Jehovah the Son. “And I, also, am your Redeemer. I am eternal; My name is wisdom; I was with God when there were no depths—before He had dug the rivers, I was there as one brought up with Him. I am Jesus, the God of Ages; I am Jesus, the man of sorrows—I am He that lives and was dead, I am alive forevermore.’ I am the High Priest of your profession, the Intercessor before the throne, the Representative of My people. I have power with God. ‘I will help you.’” Poor worm, your Redeemer vows to help you! By His bleeding hands He covenants to give you aid. And then comes the Holy Spirit. “And I,” says the Spirit, “am also God—not an influence, but a person—I, eternal and everlasting, co-existent with the Father and the Son—I, who did brood over chaos when as yet the world was not brought into form and fashion, and did sow the earth with the seeds of life when I did brood over it—I,

who brought again from the dead your Lord Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of the sheep—I, who am the Eternal Spirit by whose power the Lord Jesus did arise from the thralldom of His tomb—I, by whom souls are quickened, by whom the elect are called out of darkness into light—I, who have power to maintain My children and preserve them to the end—“I will help you.” Now, soul, gather up these three; and do you need more help than they can give? What? Do you need more strength than the Omnipotence of the United Trinity? Do you need more wisdom than exists in the Father, more love than displays itself in the Son, and more power than is manifest in the influences of the Spirit? Bring here your empty pitcher! Surely this well will fill it. Hurry! Gather up your needs, and bring them here—your emptiness, your woes, your needs! Behold, this river of God is full for your supply. What can you need beside? Stand up, Christian, in this, your might—Jehovah Father, Jehovah Jesus, Jehovah Spirit—these are with you to help you! This is the first thing. It is an *amplification*.

II. And now, secondly, concerning that word, “your Redeemer,” it is a SWEETENING OF THE PROMISE. Did you never notice that a promise always seems all the sweeter for having Jesus in it? All the promises are yes and amen in Him, but when a promise mentions the name of the Redeemer, it imparts a peculiar blessedness to it! Brothers and sisters, it is something like, if I may represent it by such a figure, the beautiful effect of certain decorations of stained glass. There are some persons whose eyes are so weak that the light seems to be injurious to them, especially the red rays of the sun, and a glass has been invented which rejects the rays that are injurious and allows only those to pass which are softened and modified to the weakness of the eyes! It seems as if the Lord Jesus were some such a glass as this. The grace of God the Trinity, shining through the man, Christ Jesus, becomes a mellow, soft light so that mortal eyes can bear it. My God, I could not drink from Your well if You had not put there the earthen pitcher of my Savior! But with Him, living waters from Your sacred well I draw! Heaven, you are too bright. I could not bear your insufferable light if I had not this shade with which I cover you. But through it, as through a mist, I do behold the halo of your glory, undiminished in its radiance but somewhat diminished in their potency which would be my destruction! The Savior seems to calm His glory, to tone it down to our poor feeble frame. His name put into this wine of heaven does not diminish in the least degree its sparkling and its exhilarating power, but it takes out of it that deep strength which might upset an angel’s brain if he could drink to his full! It takes away the profundity of mystery which would make the deep old wine of the kingdom intoxicating rather than cheering. Christ Jesus, cast into the river of God,

makes all the streams more sweet! And when the believer sees God in the person of the Savior, he then sees the God whom he can love and to whom with boldness he can approach! Surely I love this promise all the better because I think I see my Savior with His hands all bleeding, stamping His hands upon it, and saying, "And your Redeemer"—and there is the blood-mark left upon the promise! It seems to me as if when God uttered that promise to the poor worm, Jacob, Jesus Christ could not be still! He heard His Father say, "Fear not, worm Jacob," and He saw the poor worm, with his head on one side, with his eyes all flowing with tears, with his heart palpitating with terror, and his arms folded in dismay—and when His Father had said, "Fear not," He stepped from behind and whispered in a voice more soft than the voice of His Father, "Fear not, worm Jacob, it is God who speaks." And then that soft voice said, "And it is your Redeemer who speaks too." *He* says, "Fear not"; He who loves you, who knows you; who has felt what you feel, who has passed through the woes which you are now enduring—He who is your Kinsman and your Brother—He also says, "Fear not worm Jacob." Oh, it is sweet; it is precious to look upon that word as spoken by our Redeemer!

III. And now, we come to the other point. I think this is put in by way of CONFIRMATION. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses surely the whole shall be established."—

"Blind unbelief is sure to err."

It needs many witnesses to make such unbelieving souls as we are believe the promises. "Now," says God, "I will help you." Unbelief! Will you doubt Jehovah? Can the "I Am that I Am" lie? Can the God of faithfulness and truth deceive you? O unbelief! Infamous traitor! Will you dare doubt Him? Yes—and Christ knew it would; and so He comes in and He says, "And your Redeemer," as a second witness, while the Spirit is the third. "Your Redeemer," volunteers to be the second guarantee, the other security to the faithfulness of this promise. The Father will lose His honor if He breaks His word; and I too do give as the security for the fulfillment of this promise, My pledge and honor also. "Your Redeemer" engages that He will help you, O you worm!

And now, I want you to read the promise, remember that it says, "Your Redeemer"; and then, as you read it through, you will see how the word, "Redeemer," seems to confirm it all. Now begin—"I will help you"—lay a stress on that word. If you read it so, there is one blow at your unbelief. "I will help you," says the Redeemer. "Others may not, but I have loved you with an everlasting love, and by the bands of My loving-kindness have I drawn you. 'I will help you,' though the earth forsakes you, though your father and your mother forsake you, I will take you up. Will you

doubt Me? I have proved My love to you. Behold this gash, this spear thrust in My side. Look here at My hands—will you doubt Me? ‘It is I.’ I said that on the waters and I said to My people, ‘Be not afraid. It is I.’ I say to you, now that you are on the waters, ‘Be not afraid. I will help you.’ Surely you need not fear that I shall ever forget you. ‘Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.’ ‘I have engraved you on My hands. Your walls are ever before Me.’ ‘I will help you.’” Now, you must just suppose the Savior standing here—that Man whose garments are red with blood—you must suppose Him standing where I stand tonight and saying to you, personally, “Fear not, I will help you.” O my Lord, I have ungratefully doubted Your promise many a time, but I think if I could see You in all Your woe and sorrow for me; if I could hear You say, “I will help you,” I would cast myself at Your feet and say, “Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief.” But though He is not here to speak it—though the lips that utter it are but the lips of man—remember that He speaks through me tonight and through His word, as truly as if He spoke Himself! If some great man should, by a servant, or by a letter send to you this message, “I will keep you,” though you had not heard his own lips declare it, yet if you saw his own handwriting, you would say, “It is enough, I believe it.” Here is the Master’s handwriting—it is His own autograph, it is written by Himself! Behold the bloody signature! It is stamped with His cross and I, His messenger, am sent tonight to myself and to you—and I say to my own heart and to you—“Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him.” For the Redeemer says, “I will help you,” and if He says, “I will help you,” who can doubt Him? Who dares distrust Him?

And now, let us read the promise again, and lay the stress on the, “will.” Oh, the “wills” and the “shalls”—they are the sweetest words in the Bible! “I *will* help you.” When God says, “I will,” there is something in it, brothers and sisters! The will of God started worlds into existence! The will of God made nature leap from chaos—the will of God sustains all worlds, “bears the earth’s huge pillars up,” and establishes creation! It is God’s, “I will.” He lets the world live. They live on the “will” of God. And if He willed that they should die, they must sink as the bubble into the breaker when its moment has arrived. And if the “will” of God is as strong as that, may we not lay a great stress upon it here—“I *will* help you”? There is no doubt about it! I do not say I perhaps may help you. No, I *will*. I do not say that possibly I may be persuaded to help you. No, I voluntarily *will* to help you. “I *will* help you.” I do not say that in all probability—ninety-nine chances out of a hundred—it is likely I may help you. No, but without allowing any perhaps, or so much as a jot or tittle of

hap or hazard, I *will!* Now, is there not strength in that? Indeed, my brothers and sisters, it is enough to cheer any man's spirit, however much he may be cast down, if God the Holy Spirit does but breathe upon the text and lets its spices flow abroad into our poor souls! "Fear not, I *will* help you."

And now, we lay stress on another word—"I will *help* you." That is very little for me to do, to *help* you. Consider what I have already done. What? Not help you? Why, I bought you with My blood! What? Not help you? I have *died* for you! And if I have done the greater, will I not do the less? *Help* you, My beloved? It is the least thing I will ever do for you! I have done more and I will do more. Before the daystar first began to shine I chose you. "I will *help* you." I made the covenant for you and exercised all the wisdom of My eternal mind in the scheming of the plan of salvation. "I will *help* you." I became a man for you! I doffed My diadem and laid aside My robe; I laid the purple of the universe aside to become a man for you! If I did this, I will *help* you. I gave My life, My soul, for you! I slumbered in the grave; I descended into hades, all for you. I will *help* you! It will cost Me nothing. Redeeming you cost Me much, but I have all and abound. In helping you, I am giving you what I have already bought for you. It is nothing, I can do it easily. "Help you?" You need never fear that! If you needed a thousand times as much help as you need, I would give it to you. But it is little that you do require compared with what I have to give. 'Tis great for you to need, but it is nothing for Me to bestow. "Help you?" Fear not! If there were an ant at the door of your granary asking for help, it would not ruin you to give him a handful of your wheat. And you are nothing but a tiny insect at the door of My all-sufficiency. All that you could ever eat, all that you could ever take—if you were to take on to all eternity—would no more diminish My all-sufficiency, than the drinking of the fish would diminish the sea! No, "I will *help* you." If I have died for you, I will not leave you.

And now, just take the last word—"I will help *you*." Lay the stress there. "Fear not, you worm Jacob. I will help *you*." If I let the stars fall, I will help *you*. If I let all nature run to rack and ruin, I will help *you*. If I permit the teeth of time to devour the solid pillars upon which the earth stands, yet I will help *you*. I have made a covenant with the earth, "that seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, shall never cease." But that covenant, though true, is not as great as the covenant that I have made concerning *you!* And if I keep My covenant with the earth, I will certainly keep My covenant with My child. "Fear not. I will help *you*." Yes, *you!* You say, "I am too little for help." But I will help you to magnify My power. You say, "I am too vile to be helped," but I will help you to manifest My grace. You say, "I have been ungrateful for former help," but I will

help you to manifest My faithfulness. You say, “But I shall still rebel, I shall still turn aside.” “I will help *you*,” to show forth My long-suffering—let it be known, “I will help *you*.”

And now just conceive my Master on His cross bleeding there, looking down on you and on me. Picture Him while His voice falters with love and misery conjoined. And hear Him! He has just now spoken to the thief and He has said to Him, “Today, shall you be with Me in paradise.” And after He has said that, He catches sight of you and of me, poor and depressed—and He says—“Fear not, worm Jacob. I will help *you*. I helped the thief—I will help *you*. I promised him that he should be with Me in paradise. I may well promise you that you shall be helped. I will help *you*.” O Master! May Your love that prompts You thus to speak, prompt us to believe You!

And now, hear Him again. He is exalted on high; He has “led captivity captive and received gifts for men”—now hear Him as in the midst of the solemn pomp of heaven, He is not unmindful of His poor relations. He looks down and He sees us still struggling with sin and care and woe in this world. He hears us claiming kingship with Himself. And He says, “Worm Jacob! Though I now do reign exalted on High, My love is still as great—I *will* help *you*!” I pray the Lord apply the sweetness of that pronoun to your hearts and to mine, my brothers and sisters. “I will help *you*.” O surely when the husband speaks to the wife in the hour of darkness and sorrow and comforts her, you can easily understand what arguments he uses, when he says, “Wife of my youth! My joy, my delight, I will help *you*!” You can easily conceive how he enumerates times of love, seasons when he stood by her in the hour of trouble. You can easily think how he reminds her of the days of their espousals and tells her of their struggles and of their joys—and he says, “Wife, can you doubt me? No. As I am a husband, I *will* help *you*!” And now you hear the Savior speaking to His church, “Betrothed to Me before time began, I have taken you into union with My adorable person. And O, My bride, though My palace stands in ruins and heaven itself should shake, I *will* help you! Forget you? Forget My bride? Be false to My betrothal? Forsake My covenant? No. Never! I *will* help *you*.” Hear the mother speaking to her little child in great danger—“Child,” she says, “I will help *you*.” And then she reminds that child that she is its mother; that from her breast the child drew its needed nourishment in the days of weakness. She reminds it how she has nursed it and rocked it upon her knees and how in every way she has been its solace and support. “Child!” she says and her heart runs over—“I will help *you*!” Why, the child never doubts it. It says, “Yes, mother, I know you will. I am sure of that; I do not need to be told it. I was certain you would, for I have had such proofs of your love.” And now

ought not we who love the Savior let our eyes run with tears and say, “O You blessed Redeemer! You need not tell us You will help us, for we know You will! Oh do not suppose that we doubt You so much as to want to be told of it again. We know You will help us. We are sure of it. Your former love, Your ancient love, the love of Your espousals, Your deeds of kindness, Your everlasting drawings—all these declare that You can never forsake us.”

And now, brothers and sisters, we are coming downstairs to eat the body of Christ, and drink His blood in a spiritual manner. And I hope while we are partaking of that bread and wine—the emblems of the Savior—we shall think we hear every mouthful of bread and every sip of wine saying out in the Master’s behalf, “*I will help you. I will help you.*” And then let you and I just frighten Satan by cheering up our spirits through the power of the Holy Spirit, and buckling on our armor; let us go forth into the world tomorrow to show what the Redeemer can do when His promise is applied by the Spirit. “Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel. I will help you.” Come, bring your fears out tonight and destroy them in the worst way you can. Hang them here upon the scaffold this night! Come now and blow them away at the great guns of the promises—let them be destroyed forever! They are renegade mutineers! Let them be cut off; let them be utterly destroyed; and let us go and sing, “Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and are troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” “*I will help you,*” says the Redeemer!

O sinners, I pity you—this is not *your* promise. If this were all that you did lose by being out of Christ, it were enough to lose indeed! May God call you and help you to trust in the Redeemer’s blood. Amen.

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INSTABILITY

NO. 158

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 11, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“Unstable as water, you shall not excel.”
Genesis 49:4.

PERFECT stability has ceased from the world since the day when Adam fell. He was stable enough when in the garden, he was obedient to his Master's will, but when he ate of the forbidden fruit he did not only slide, himself, but he shook the standing places of all his posterity! Perfect stability belongs alone to God. He alone, of all beings, is without variability or shadow of a turning. He is Immutable, He will not change! He is all-wise, He need not change. He is perfect. He cannot change. But men, the best of them are mutable and, therefore, to a degree they are unstable and do not excel. Yet it is remarkable that although man has lost perfect stability, he has not lost the admiration of it! Perhaps there is no virtue, or, rather, no compound of virtues which the world more esteems than stability of mind. You will find that although men have often misplaced their praise and have called those great who are not great, those moral who are far below the level of morality, yet they have scarcely ever called a man great who has not been consistent and who has not had strength of mind enough to be stable in his principles. I know not how it is, but so it is—whenever a man is firm and consistent—we always admire him for it. Though we feel certain that he is wrong, yet his consistency in his wrong still excites our admiration. We have known men whom we have thought to be insane—they have conceived a design so ridiculous that we could only laugh at them and despise their idea. But they have stuck to it and we have said, “Well, there is nothing like a man standing to a thing.” And we have even admired the senseless, brainless idiot, as we have thought him so, when we have seen him stubbornly insisting that his idea would at last triumph and persevering in futile endeavors to realize his wish.

Now, my brothers and sisters, if it is so in earthly things, it is so also in spiritual! Instability in religion is a thing which every man despises. Although every man has, to a degree, evil in himself, stability in the firm profession and practice of godliness will always win respect—even from the worldly. And certainly it will not be forgotten by Him whose smile is honor and whose praise is glory—even the great Lord and Master—before whom we stand or fall. I have many characters here today whom I desire

to address in the words of my text, “Unstable as water, you shall not excel.” I propose, first, to notice briefly *the common and unavoidable instabilities* which necessarily attach themselves to the best of Christians. I shall then note the character of *a Christian who is noted for glaring instability* but who, notwithstanding, has sufficient godliness to bid us hope that he is a child of God. I shall then have to do with *the mere professor* who is “unstable as water” and cannot excel in any way whatever. And then I must deal with the unstable *sinner* who, in any pretensions he may ever make to better feelings, is always like the early cloud and the morning dew.

I. First, then, to ALL Christians, permit me to address myself. Our father, Adam, spoiled us all. And although the second Adam has renewed us, He has not yet removed from us the infirmities which the first Adam left us as a mournful legacy. We are, none of us, stable as we should be. We had a notion when we were first converted that we would never know a change. Our soul was so full of love that we could not imagine it possible we would ever flag in our devotion. Our faith was so strong in our Incarnate Master that we smiled at older Christians who talked of doubts and fears. Our faces were so steadfastly set Zionward that we never imagined By-Path Meadow would ever be trod by our feet. We felt sure that our course would certainly be “like the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day.” But, my brothers and sisters, have we found it so? Have we not this day to lament that we have been very changeable and inconstant, even unstable as water? How unstable have we been in our frames? Today we have climbed the top of Pisgah, and have viewed the heavenly landscape by the eyes of faith; tomorrow we have been plunged in the dungeon of despair, and could not call a grain of hope our own! Today we feast at the banqueting table of communion; tomorrow we will be exclaiming, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even unto His feet.” At night I have said, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” Tomorrow has beheld my grasp loosened and prayer neglected until God has said, “I will return unto My rest until you have acknowledged your transgressions which you have committed against Me.” High frames one day, low frames the next! We have had more changes than even this variable climate of ours! It is a great mercy for us that frames and slings are not always the index of our security—for we are as safe when we are mourning, as we are when we are singing! But verily, if our true state before God had changed as often as our experience of His presence, we would have been cast into the bottomless pit of hell years ago!

And how variable have we been in our faith! In the midst of one trouble we have declared, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” We have courted the jeer; we have laughed at the scorn of the world and have stood like rocks in the midst of foaming billows when all men were against us! Another week has seen us fleeing away after denying our

Master, because like Peter we were afraid of some little maid, or of our own shadow! After coming out of a great trouble, we have resolutely declared, "I can never doubt God again," but the next cloud that has swept the sky has darkened all our faith! We have been variable in our faith.

And have you not also, at times, my friends, felt variable in your love? Sweet Master, King of heaven, fairest of a thousand fairs! My heart is knit to You—my soul melts at the mention of Your name! My heart bubbles up with a good matter when I speak of the things which I have made touching the King—

***"The strings that bind around my heart,
Tortures and racks may tear them off.
But they can never, never part,
The hold I have of Christ, my love."***

Surely, I could die for You and think it better than to live, if so I might honor You! This is the sweet manner of our spirit when our love is burning and fervent—but soon we neglect the fire—it becomes dim and we have to rake among the ashes even for a spark, crying—

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

How unstable we are! At one time we are quite certain we are the Lord's. Though an angel from heaven should deny our election, or our adoption, we would reply that we have the witness of the Spirit, that we are born of God! But perhaps within two minutes we shall not be able to say that we ever had one spiritual feeling—we shall perhaps think that we never repented aright, never fled to Christ aright and did never believe to the saving of the soul! Oh, it is no wonder that we do not excel when we are such unstable creatures! Alas, my brothers and sisters, I might enlarge on the inconsistencies of the mass of Christians. How unfaithful we have been to our dedication vows! How negligent of close communion! How unlike we have been to holy Enoch! How much more like Peter, when he followed afar off! I might tell how one day, like the mariner, we mounted up to heaven and how the next moment we have gone to the lowest depths when the waves of God's grace have ceased to lift us up! I wonder at David, at Jacob and at every instance we have in Scripture of excellent men—marvel, O you angels, that God should ever make such bright stars out of such black blots as we are! How can it ever be that man, so fickle, so inconstant, should nevertheless be a pillar in the house of his God and should be made to stand "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"? How is it, O our God, that You could have steered a vessel so safely to its port which was so easily driven by every wind and carried away by every wave? He is a good marksman who can shoot so crooked an arrow straight to its target. Marvel not that we do not excel—marvel that we do excel in anything unstable as we are!

II. And now, leaving these general remarks I have to single out a certain class of persons. I believe them to be TRUE CHRISTIANS but they are Christians of a singular sort. I would not be so harsh as to condemn them, though I must certainly condemn the error with which I am about to find fault! I doubt not that they have been converted in a genuine manner, but still they are often a mystery to me and I think they are a mystery to themselves! How many Christians have we in our churches who are unstable as water? I suppose they were born so. They are just as unstable in business as they are in religion. They open a grocer's shop and shut it in three months—and turn drapers and when they have been drapers long enough to become almost bankrupts—and then they leave that and try something else! When they were boys they could never play a game through—they must always be having something fresh and now they are just as childish as when they were children! Look at them in doctrine—you never know where to find them. You meet them one day and they are very full of some super-fall of man doctrine. They have been to some strong Calvinist place and nothing will suit them except the very highest doctrine and that must be spiced with a little of the gall of bitterness or they cannot think it is the genuine thing! Very likely next week they will be Arminians. They will give up all idea of a fixed fate and talk of free will and man's responsibility like the most earnest Primitive Methodist! Then they steer another way. "Nothing is right but the church of England. Is it not established by law? Ought not every Christian to go to his parish church?" Ah, let them alone, they will be at the most gross schismatic shop in the metropolis before long! Or if they do not change their denomination, they are always changing their minister. A new minister starts up—there is no one since the apostles like he! They take a seat and join the church. He is everything to them. In three months they have done with him! Another minister rises up some distance off and these people are not particular how far they walk—so they go hear him. He is the great man of the age! He will see every man's candle out and his will burn on—but a little trouble comes on the church and they leave *him*. They have no attachment to anything. They are merely feathers in the wind or corks on the wave! They hear a sermon preached and they say, "I think it did me good," but they do not venture to be sure till they speak to some great man who is a member of the church and he says, "Oh, there was nothing in it." "Ah, just so," they say and cannot make up their minds whether it was a good sermon or not! They are unstable. They could easily be talked into anything or out of anything! They never had any brains in their head, I suppose. Or if they ever had any, they gave them to somebody else to muddle as he liked! They believe the last man they hear and are easily guided and led by him.

Now, if the matter ended there, it would not be so bad. But these poor people are just the same with regard to any religious enterprise they take in hand. There is a Sunday school—they are enchanted with the thought.

What a lovely thing it must be to sit on a form and try to teach half-a-dozen boys the way to heaven! They go to the Sunday school and are alarmed the very first day when they hear all the boys talking louder than the teachers! After about ten minutes they think it is not quite as nice as they thought. Perhaps they think it is that particular school they do not like and they try another. But at last they give up all Sunday school teaching and make up their minds that it is not a good thing, at least not for them. Then there is a Ragged school. What a divine enterprise! They will be Ragged school teachers and off they go with their hearts full of fire and their eyes full of tears over these poor children they are going to teach! Ah, how soon is their zeal withered and all their glory departed! Hear them talk about Ragged Schools a month afterwards—they shake their heads and say it is a very arduous enterprise. They do not think they had a call to it—they will try something else and so they keep on to the end of the chapter—they are “everything by turns and nothing long.” There are some brothers in the ministry very much of the same sort. They never preach in one pulpit long, (though some say they preach there too long, for they ought never to have preached there at all)! But I sometimes think that if they had had a little more courage and bore a little more of the brunt of the battle, they might have done good to some of the villages where they were placed. But they are unstable as water and everybody sees that they cannot excel. The same instability men will carry out in their friendships. They meet a person one day and are as friendly as possible with him—they meet him the next day—he does not know what he has done to offend them but they turn their head another way. And some carry their instability a little farther; they carry it into their moral character. I shall not deny their Christianity, but they are a strange sort of Christians, for these people will sometimes, at least, stretch the cords of godliness a little too far and though they certainly do act in the main conscientiously, yet their conscience is a large one and it admits a great many things which tender-hearted people would think were wrong! We cannot find out any crime for which we could excommunicate them, yet in our hearts we often say, “Dear me, what a sad disgrace So-and-So is to the cause! We could do far better without him than with him, for he casts such a slur on the name of Christ.”

Now, do not think I am drawing a fancy picture. I beg to inform you I am not. There are persons here who are furnishing me with the model—and if they choose to think me personal, I shall be obliged to them, for I intend to be! These persons are to be found in all churches and among all denominations. You have met them everywhere. They are as unstable as water. They do not excel.

Now, let me address these persons very earnestly. My brothers and sisters, I would be far from dealing in a censorious manner with you for I am inclined to think that your instability is a little owing to some latent insanity. We are no doubt, all of us, insane to a degree. There is some lit-

tle thing in us which if we saw in another, we should regard as being a little madness. I would therefore, my brethren, deal very leniently with you but at the same time let me very solemnly address you as a Christian minister speaking to a professedly Christian man or woman. My brothers and sisters, how much moral weight you lose in the church and in the world by your perpetual instability! No one ever attaches any importance to your opinion because your opinion has no importance in it—seeing that you yourself will contradict it in a very short time! You see many persons growing up in the church who have an influence over their neighbor for good. You sometimes wish that you, too, could strengthen the young convert, or reclaim and guide the wanderer. My brothers and sisters, you cannot do it because of your inconsistency! Now is it not a fearful thing that you should be throwing away the whole force and weight of your character simply because of this insane habit of yours of being always unstable? I beseech you, my brothers and sisters, remember that you are responsible to God for your influence! And if you can have influence and do not get it, you are as sinful as if, having influence, you had misused it! Do not, I beseech you, allow this instability to continue lest you should become like the chaff which the wind drives away—of no account to the world at all! Remember, my brothers and sisters, how your instability ruins your usefulness—you never continue long enough in an enterprise to do good! What would you think of the farmer who should farm just long enough to plow his ground and sow his wheat but not long enough to get a harvest? You would think him foolish—and just so you are foolish—you begin time enough to be overworked before you have well commenced! My brothers and sisters, review your history! What have you done? You have made hundreds of futile attempts to do something, but a list of failures must be the only record of your labors! What do you think will be your distress of mind when you come to die, when you look back upon your life and see it all the way through a host of blunders? Do you not think it will stuff the pillow of your dying bed with thorns to think that you were so wayward in disposition, so unstable in heart that you were unable to accomplish anything for your Master? When you lay your crown at His feet you will have to say, “Here is my crown, my Master, but it has not a solitary star in it for I never worked long enough for You in any enterprise to win a soul. I only did enough to fail and to be laughed at by all.” And I would have you think also, my brothers and sisters, how can you be a growing Christian and yet be so changeable as you are? If a gardener should plant a tree today and take it up in the course of a month and transfer it to another place, what crop would he have when autumn came? He would not have much to repay his toil. The continual changing of the tree would put it into such a weakly condition that if it did not actually die, it would certainly produce nothing. And how can you expect to grow in knowledge when you have no steadfast principle? The man who espouses one form of doc-

trine and does it honestly, will, though it is a mistaken form, at least understand it! But you do not know enough of Calvinism to defend it from its opponents, or enough of Arminianism to defend it from the Calvinists! You are not wise in anything. You are a rolling stone—you gather no moss. You stay in one school only long enough to read through the curriculum but you learn nothing. I see you are smiling—and yet some of those who smiled are just the men and women we smile at. They are here. But alas—I have noticed one sad thing respecting these people—they are generally the most conceited in all the world—they think they are excellent men and women. They are at home everywhere. If they are in error, they know they can get right tomorrow. And then if someone else will again convince them they are in error, they know no difference between error and truth except the difference which other people like to point out to them. O you unstable Christians, hear the words of the Lord! “Unstable as water you shall not excel.” Your life shall have little of the cream of happiness upon it—you shall not walk in the midst of the king’s highway in which no lion shall be found. You shall walk on the edge of the way where you shall encounter every danger, feel every hardship and endure every ill! You shall have enough of God’s comfort to keep you alive, but not enough to give you joy in your spirit and consolation in your heart! Oh, I beseech you, ponder a little. Study the Word more—know what is right and defend what is right! Study the law more—know what is right and do what is right! Study God’s will more—know what He would have you do and then do it, for an unstable Christian never can excel!

III. But now, there is another class of persons whom we dare not, in the spirit of the widest charity, admit to be true Christians. They are PROFESSORS. They have been baptized. They receive the Lord’s Supper. They attend prayer meetings, church meetings and everything else that belongs to the order of Christians with which they are connected. They are never behind in religious performances. They are the most devout hypocrites! They are the most pious formalists that could be discovered the wide world over! Their religion on the Sabbath is of the most superfine order! Their godliness, when they are in their pews, cannot be exceeded! They sing with the most eloquent praise! They pray the longest and most hypocritical prayer that man could utter! They are just up to the mark in every religious point of view except on the point which looks to the *heart*! As far as the externals of godliness go, there is nothing to be desired—they tithe the anise, the mint and the cumin—they fast twice in the week! Or if they do not fast, they are quite as religious in not fasting and are just as godly in not doing it, as if they did it!

But these people are unstable as water in the worst sense, for while they sing Watt’s hymns on Sunday, they sing other songs on Monday! And while they drink sacramental cups on Sabbath evenings, there are other cups of which they drink too deep on other nights! And though

they pray most marvelously, there is a pun on that word, *pray*, and they know how to exercise it upon their customers in business! They have a great affection for everything that is pious and devout, but alas, like Balaam, they take the reward of wickedness and they perish in the gainsaying of Core. “These are spots in your feasts of charity when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear; they are clouds without water, carried about of winds—trees whose fruit withers without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame. Wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” They bring a disgrace upon the cause which they profess—the vilest profane swearer brings no more dishonor on God’s holy name than they do! They can find fault with everything in the church while they commit all manner of wickedness and are, as the apostle said, even weeping, “enemies of the cross of Christ, for their God is their belly and they glory in their shame.” O hypocrite! You think that you shall excel because the minister has been duped, and gives you credit for a deep experience; because the deacons have been entrapped, and think you to be eminently godly; because the church members receive you to their houses, and think you a dear child of God? Poor soul! You may go to your grave with the delusion in your brain that all is right with you, but remember, though like a sheep you are laid in your grave, death will find you out! He will say to you, off with your mask, man! Away with all your robes! Up with that whitewashed sepulcher! Take off that green turf—let the worms be seen! Out with the body! Let us see the reeking corruption! And what will you say when your abominably corrupt and filthy heart shall be opened before the sun and men and angels hear your lies and hypocrisies laid bare before them? Will you play the hypocrite then? Soul, come and sing God’s praises in the day of judgment with false lips! Tell Him, now, while a widow’s house is in your throat, tell Him that you love Him! Come, now, you that devour the fatherless, you that rob, you that do uncleanness—tell Him now that you did make your boast in the Lord! Tell Him that you did preach His Word! Tell Him that you did walk in His streets! Tell Him you did make it known that you were one of the excellent of the earth! What? Man, is your babbling tongue silent for once? What is the matter with you? You were never slow to talk of your godliness! Speak out and say, “I took the sacramental cup. I was a professor!” Oh how changed! The whitewashed sepulcher has become white in another sense—he is white with horror! Look! The talkative has become dumb. The boaster is silent. The formalist’s garb is torn to rags—the moths have devoured their beauty. Their gold has become tarnished and their silver cankered. Ah, it must be so with every man who has thus belied God and his own conscience! The stripping day of judgment will reveal him to God and to himself. And how awful shall be the damnation of the hypocrite! If I knew that I must be damned, one of my prayers would be, “Lord, let me not be damned with hypocrites,” for surely to be

damned with them is to be damned twice over! Think of a hypocrite going into hell. You know how one of the Prophets depicted the advent of a great monarch into hell, when all the kings that had been his slaves rose up and said, "Are you become like one of us?" Do you not think you see the godly Christian deacon, so godly that he was a liar all his life? Do you not think you see the eminent Christian member who kept a bank, took the chair at public meetings, swindled all he could and died in despair? Do you not think you see him coming into the pit of hell? There is one man there that was a drunk all his life. Hear his speech, "*Ah, you were a sober man! You used to talk to me and tell me that drunks could not inherit the Kingdom of heaven. Aha, and are you become like one of us?*" Another says, "*About a month ago, when we were on earth, you met me and rebuked me for my profane swearing, and told me that all swearers should have their portion in the lake of fire. Ah, there is not much to choose between you and me now, is there?*" And the profane man laughs as well as he can laugh in misery at his desperately religious adviser. "Oh," says another—and they look round at one another with demoniac mirth; as much mockery of joy as hell can afford—"The parson here? Now preach us a sermon! Now pray us a long prayer! There's plenty of time to do it!" "No!" says another, "*there is no widow's house to eat here, and he only prayed on the strength of the widow's house.*"

This is a hard scene for me to describe. But I doubt not of its truthfulness. It may be given to you in rough language, but it needs far rougher to make you know the dread reality! And what a solemn thought it is! There is not one man or one woman in this place who has not need to ask, "Is it so with me?" Many have been deceived—I may be—you may be, my hearer. "I am not deceived," says one, "I am a minister." My brothers, there are many of us who are preachers who are like Noah's carpenters—we may help to build an ark and never get in it ourselves! Another says, "I shall not endure such language as that. I am a deacon." You may be all that and yet after having ministered, instead of earning to yourself a good degree, you may be cast from the presence of God! "No," says another, "but I have been a Christian professor these last 40 years and nobody has found fault with me." Ah, I have known many a rotten bough to have been on a tree 40 years and you may be rotten and yet stand all that time! But the winds of judgment will crack you at last and down you will fall! "No," says another. "I know I am not insincere. I am sure I am right." I am glad that you think so, but I would not like you to say it. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls." There have been many great bubbles that have burst before this and your piety may be one of them! "Let not him that puts on the harness boast as though he put it off." It will be time enough for you to be quite sure when you are quite safe. Yet blessed be God, we hope we can say, "O Lord, if not awfully deceived, we have given our hearts to You! Lord You know all things. You know that we love You and if we do not, Lord, You know we pray this

prayer from our hearts—“Search me, O God, and try my ways; prove me and know my heart and see if there are any evil ways in me and lead me in the way everlasting.” May God the Holy Spirit strengthen and settle each of us!

IV. And now, I have the last word to address to those who MAKE NO PRETENSION TO RELIGION whatever. I have heard hundreds of persons in my short life excuse their sin by saying, “Well, I make no profession,” and I have always thought it one of the strangest excuses—one of the most wild oddities of apology to which the human mind could ever resort! Take an illustration which I have used before. Tomorrow morning, when the Lord Mayor is sitting, there are two men brought up before him for robbery. One of them says he is not guilty. He declares that he is a good character and he is an honest man in general, though he was guilty in this case. He is punished. The other one says, “Well, Your Worship, I make no profession. I’m a down right thorough thief and I don’t make any profession of being honest at all.” Why you can suppose how much more severe the sentence would be upon such a man! Now, when you say I do not make any profession of being religious, what does that mean? It means that you are a despiser of God and of God’s law! It means that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. You who boast of making no profession of religion—you are boasting you know not what of! You would think it a strange thing for a man to boast that he made no profession of being a gentleman, or no profession of being honest, or no profession of being sober, or no profession of being chaste. You would shun a man at once who did this! And you who make no pretensions to religion just make your trial the more easy—for there will be no need for any dispute concerning you. When the scales of Justice are lifted up at last, you will be found to be light weight and that upon your own confession! I cannot imagine you urging such a plea as that when God shall judge you—“My Lord, I made no profession.” “What?” says the King, “Did My subject make no profession of obedience?” “O Lord, I made no profession.” “What?” says the Creator, “Make no profession of acknowledging My rights?” “I made no profession of religion.” “What?” says the Judge, “Did I send My Son into the world to die and did this man make no profession of casting his soul upon Him? What? Did he make no profession of his need of mercy? Then he shall have none! Does he dare tell Me to My face that he never made any profession of faith in Christ, and never had anything to do with the Savior? Then insomuch as he despised My Son, and despised His cross, and rejected His salvation, let him die the death!” And what that death is with its everlasting wailings and gnashing of teeth, eternity alone can tell!

O sinner! You have some part and lot in my text. You are “unstable as water.” Let me remind you that though you make no profession of religion, now, there was a time when you did. Strong man, you are laughing now—I repeat it—there was a time when you did talk about religion! It is

not quite gone from your memory. You lay sick with fever for six weeks—do you remember when the delirium came on and they all thought that you must die? Do you recollect when your poor brain was right for a moment how you asked the physician whether there was any hope for you and he would not exactly say, “No,” but he looked so blank at you that you understood what it meant? Do you remember the agony with which you looked forward to death? Do you remember how you groaned in your spirit and said, “O God, have mercy upon me”? Do you remember that you got a little better and you told your friends that if you lived you would serve God? “Oh, it is all over now,” you say, you were a fool! Yes, you were a fool, that is true—you were a fool to have said what you did not mean and to have lied before God! You do not profess religion! But you remember the last time the terrific thunder and lightning came! You were out in the storm. A flash came very near you. You are a bold man but not so bold as you pretend to be! You shook from head to foot and when the thunder clap succeeded, you were almost down on your knees—and before you knew it you were in prayer—“Please, God, get me home tonight,” you said, “I shall not take Your name in vain again!” But you have done it. You are unstable as water! You went sometime ago to a church or a chapel—I care not which—the minister told you plainly where you were going. You stood there and trembled. Tears ran down your cheeks. You did not beat your wife that Sunday. You were a great deal more sober that week and when your companions said you looked squeamish, you denied it and said you had no such thoughts as they imagined. “Unstable as water.” Oh, there are some of you still worse than that—for not once, nor twice, but scores of times you have been driven under a faithful minister to the very verge of what you thought was repentance and then, just when something said in your heart, “This is a turning point,” you have started back! You have chosen the wages of unrighteousness and have again wandered into the world. Soul, my heart yearns for you! “Unstable as water you shall not excel.” No, but I pray the Lord to work in you something that will be stable. For we all believe—and what I say is not a matter of fiction but a thing that you believe in your own hearts to be true—we all believe that we must stand before the judgment bar of God and before long give account of the things done in the body, whether they are good or whether they are evil.

Friend, what account will you give of your broken vows, of your perjured soul? What will you have to say why judgment should not be pronounced against you? Ah, sinner, you will need Christ then! What would you give, then, for one drop of His blood; for the hem of His garment! Oh, that I might but look to Him and be lightened. Oh, would to God that I might hear the gospel once again!” I hear you wailing when God has said, “Depart you cursed!” And this is the burden of your song, “Fool that I was, to have despised Jesus who was my only hope, to have broken my promise and gone back to the poor vain world that deluded me, after all!”

And now I hear Him say “I called but you refused. I stretched out My hand, but no man regarded. Now I will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear comes.” I always think those two last sentences the most awful in the Bible! “I will laugh at your calamity.” The laugh of the Almighty over men that have rebelled against Him—who have despised Him and trod His gospel underfoot! “I also will laugh at your calamity and I will mock when your fear comes.” Rail at that if you like, it is sure, sirs! Remember that all your kicking at God’s laughter will not make Him leave it off—remember that all your rebellious speeches against Him shall be avenged in that day—unless you repent! But if you despise Him, your blasphemy cannot quench the flames of hell! Nor will your jeers slay the sword of vengeance—fall it must and it will fall on you all the more heavily because you did despise it!

Hear the gospel and then farewell. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was born of the Virgin Mary and became a man; He lived on earth a life of holiness and suffering. At last He was nailed to the cross and in deep woe He died. He was buried. He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven. And now God “commands all men everywhere to repent.” And He tells them this—“Whoever believes on the Son of God shall not perish but have eternal life.” And this is His gospel. If you this day feel yourself to be a sinner, if that is a feeling worked in you by the Holy Spirit, and not a casual thought flashing across the soul—then Christ was punished for *your* sins. And you cannot be punished! For God will not punish twice for one offense. Believe in Christ—cast your soul on the atonement that He made. And although black as hell in sin, you may this day find yourself—through the efficacious blood of Christ—whiter than snow! The Lord help you, poor soul, to believe that the Man who died on Calvary was God, and that He took the sin of all believers upon Himself—that you, being a sinner and a believer—He has taken your sins, and therefore, you are free! Thus believe and by faith you will have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement.

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THE TRUE CHRISTIAN'S BLESSEDNESS

NO. 159

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 18, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

***“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God,
to them who are the called according to His purpose.”
Romans 8:28.***

I. WE have here the description of a true Christian and a declaration of that Christian's blessedness. We have him first very succinctly but very fully described in these words—“Them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” These two expressions are the great distinguishing marks whereby we are able to separate the precious from the vile by discovering to us who are the children of God.

The first contains an outward manifestation of the second—“Them that love God.” Now, there are many things in which the worldly and the godly do agree, but on this point there is a vital difference. No ungodly man loves God—at least not in the Biblical sense of the term. An unconverted man may love *a* god, as, for instance, the god of nature and the god of the imagination. But the God of revelation no man can love unless divine grace has been poured into his heart to turn him from that natural enmity of the heart towards God in which all of us are born. And there may be many differences between godly men, as there undoubtedly are. They may belong to different sects. They may hold very opposite opinions, but all godly men agree in this—that they love God. Whoever loves God, without doubt, is a Christian! And whoever loves Him not, however high may be his pretensions, however boastful his professions—he has not seen God, neither known Him—for “God is love and he that dwells in love dwells in God and God in him.” True believers love God as their *Father*. They have “the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Abba, Father.” They love Him as their King, they are willing to obey Him. To walk in His commands is their delight. No path is so soft to their feet as the path of God's precepts and the way of obedience to them. They also love God as their *portion*, for in Him they live and move and have their being. God is their All. Without Him they have nothing. But possessing Him, however little they may have of outward good, they feel that they are rich to all the intents of bliss! They love God as their future *inheritance*. They believe that when days and years are past they shall enter into the bosom of God. And their highest joy and delight is the full con-

viction and belief that one day they shall dwell forever near His throne, be hidden in the brightness of His glory and enjoy His everlasting favor. Do you love God—not with *lip* service—but with *heart* service? Do you love to pay Him homage? Do you love to hold communion with Him? Do you frequent His mercy seat? Do you abide in His commandments and desire to be conformed unto His image? If so, then the sweet things which we shall have to say this morning are yours! But if you are no lover of God, but a stranger to Him, I beseech you do not pilfer today and steal a comfort that was not intended for you. “All things work together for good,” but not to all men! They only work together for the good of “them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

Note the second phrase which also contains a description of the Christian—“the called according to His purpose.” However much the Arminian may try to fritter away the meaning of this 8th chapter of Romans—we are obliged, as long as we use terms and words—to say that the 8th and 9th chapters of Romans are the very pillars of that gospel which men now call Calvinism! No man after having read these chapters attentively and having understood them, can deny that the doctrines of sovereign, distinguishing grace are the sum and substance of the teaching of the Bible. I do not believe that the Bible is to be understood except by receiving these doctrines as true. The apostle says that those that love God are “the called according to His *purpose*” by which he means to say two things—first, that all that love God love Him because He called them to love Him. *He* called them, mark you. All men are called by the ministry, by the Word, by daily providence to love God—that is a *common call* always given to men to come to Christ. The great bell of the gospel rings a universal welcome to every living soul that breathes! But alas, though that bell has the very sound of heaven and though all men do, in a measure hear it, for “their line is gone out into all the earth and their word unto the end of the world,” yet there was never an instance of any man having been brought to God *simply by that sound!* All these things are insufficient for the salvation of any man! There must be superadded the *special call*, the call which man cannot resist, the call of *efficacious grace* working in us to will and to do of God’s good pleasure! Now, all them that love God love Him because they have had a special, irresistible, supernatural call. Ask them whether they would have loved God if left to themselves—and to a man—whatever their doctrines, they will confess—

**“Grace taught my soul to pray,
Grace made my eyes overflow,
‘Tis grace that kept me to this day
And will not let me go.”**

I never heard a Christian yet who said that he came to God of himself, left to his own free will! Free will may look very pretty in *theory*, but I never yet met anyone who found it works well in *practice*! We all confess that if we are brought to the marriage banquet—

***“It was the same love that spread the feast
That gently forced us in—
Else we had still refused to taste
And perished in our sin.”***

Many men object to election. The very word with some is a great bugaboo. They no sooner hear it than they turn indignantly upon their heels. But know this, O man—whatever you say of this doctrine—it is a stone upon which, if any man falls, he shall suffer loss! But if it falls upon him it shall grind him to powder! Not all the sophisms of the learned, nor all the slight of hand of the cunning will ever be able to sweep the doctrine of election out of Holy Scripture! Let any man hear and judge—listen to this passage in the 9th chapter of Romans—“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to *election* might stand, not of works but of Him who calls, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy.” And—“You will say then unto me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will? No but, O man, who are you who reply against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me this way? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor! What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He has called, not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles.” These are God’s words. If any man objects, let him object. He rejects the testimony of God against himself! If I promulgated the doctrine on my own authority, I could not blame you if you should turn against me and reject it. But when on the authority of Holy Scripture I propound it; God forbid that any man should quarrel therewith!

I have affirmed and I am sure most Christians will bear witness that what I said was the truth of God—that if any man loves God, he loves Him because God gave him grace to love Him. Now, suppose I should put the following question to any converted man in this hall. *Side by side with you there sits an ungodly person; you two have been brought up together, you have lived in the same house, you have enjoyed the same*

means of grace—you are converted; he is not. Will you please tell me what has made the difference? Without a solitary exception the answer would be this—"If I am a Christian, and he is not, unto God be the honor!" Do you suppose for a moment that there is any injustice in God in having given you grace which He did not give to another? I suppose you say, "Injustice, no. God has a right to do as He wills with His own. I could not claim grace, nor could my companions. God *chose* to give it to me—the other has rejected divine grace willfully to his own fault, and I would have done the same but that He gave 'more grace,' whereby my will was constrained." Now, sir, if it is not wrong for God to do the thing, how can it be wrong for God to *plan* to do the thing; and what is election but God's plan to do what He does? It is a fact that any man must be a fool who would dare to deny that God does give to one man more grace than to another. We cannot account for the salvation of one and the non-salvation of another but by believing that God has worked more effectually in one man's heart than another's—unless you choose to give the honor to *man* and say it consists in one man's being better than another. But if so, I will have no argument with you because you do not know the gospel at all! If you did, you would know that salvation is not of works but of grace. If, then, you give the honor to God, you are bound to confess that God has done more for the man that is saved than for the man that is not saved. How, then, can *election* be unjust, if its *effect* is not unjust? However, just or unjust as man may choose to think it, God has done it and the fact stands in man's face—let him reject it as he pleases! God's people are known by their outward mark—they love God and the secret cause of their loving God is this—God chose them from before the foundation of the world that they would love Him and He sent forth the call of His divine grace so that they were called according to His purpose and were led by grace to love and to fear Him. If that is not the meaning of the text I, do not understand the English language. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, *to them who are the called according to His purpose.*"

Now, my hearers, before I proceed to enter into the text, let the questions go round. Do I love God? Have I any reason to believe that I have been called according to His purpose? Have I been born-again from above? Has the Spirit operated in my heart in a manner to which flesh and blood can never attain? Have I passed from death unto life by the quickening agency of the Holy Spirit? If I have, then God purposed that I should do so and the whole of this great promise is mine!

II. We shall take the words one by one and try to explain them.

1. Let us begin with the word, "work." "We know that all things *work*." Look around, above, beneath, and all things *work*. They work *in opposition to idleness*. The idle man that folds his arms or lies upon the bed of

sloth is an exception to God's rule, for except himself, all things work! There is not a star though it seems to sleep in the deep blue firmament which does not travel its myriads of miles and work. There is not an ocean, or a river which is not always working, either clapping its thousand hands with storms, or bearing on its bosom the freight of nations. There is not a silent nook within the deepest forest glade where work is not going on. Nothing is idle. The world is a great machine but it is never standing still—silently all through the watches of the night and through the hours of day the earth revolves on its axis and works out its predestinated course! Silently the forest grows, soon it is felled. But all the while between its growing and felling it is at work. Everywhere the earth works. Mountains work—nature in its inmost heart is at work. Even the center of the great heart of the world is always beating. Sometimes we discover its working in the volcano and the earthquake but, when most still, all things are working.

They are always working too, *in opposition to the word play*. Not only are they ceaselessly active but they are active for a purpose. We are apt to think that the motion of the world and the different evolutions of the stars are but like the turning round of a child's windmill—they produce nothing. That old preacher Solomon once said as much as that. He said—"The sun also rises and the sun goes down and hastens to his place where he arose. The wind goes toward the south and turns about unto the north. It whirls about continually and the wind returns again according to his circuits." But Solomon did not add that things are not what they seem. The world is not at play. It has an objective in its wildest movement. Avalanche, hurricane, earthquake are but order in an unusual form. Destruction and death are but progress in veiled attire. Everything that is and is done works out some great end and purpose. The great machine of this world is not only in motion, but there is something weaving in it which as yet mortal eye has not fully seen—which our text hints at when it says it is working out good for God's people!

And once again—all things work *in opposition to Sabbath*. We morally speak of work, especially on this day, as being the opposite of sacred rest and worship. Now at the present moment all things work. Since the day when Adam fell, all things have had to toil and labor. Before Adam's fall the world kept high and perpetual holiday. But now the world has come to its workdays—now it has to toil. When Adam was in the garden the world had its Sabbath—and it shall never have another Sabbath till the Millennium shall dawn, and then when all things have ceased to work, and the kingdoms shall be given up to God, even the Father; then shall the world have her Sabbath and shall rest; but at present all things work.

Dear brethren, let us not wonder if we have to work, too. If we have to toil, let us remember—this is the world's week of toil. The 6,000 years of continual labor and toil and travail have happened not to us, alone, but to the whole of God's great universe. The whole world is groaning and travailing. Let us not be backward in doing our work. If all things are working, let us work, too—"work while it is called today, for the night comes when no man can work." And let the idle and slothful remember that they are a great irregularity. They are blots in the great work of God! They mean nothing. In all the book of letters with which God has written out the great word, "work," they are nothing at all! But let the man who works, though it is with the sweat of his brow and with aching hands remember that he, if he is seeking to bless the Lord's people, is in sympathy with all things—not only in sympathy with their work but in sympathy with their aim!

2. Now, the next word, "All things work *together*." That is *in opposition to their apparent confliction*. Looking upon the world with the mere eyes of sense and reason, we say, "Yes, all things work but they work contrary to one another. There are opposite currents. The wind blows to the north and to the south. The world's boat, it is true, is always tossed with waves, but these waves toss her first to the right and then to the left. They do not steadily bear her onward to her desired haven. It is true the world is always active, but it is with the activity of the battlefield, wherein hosts encounter hosts and the weaker are overcome." Be not deceived. It is not so—things are not what they seem—"All things work *together*." There is no opposition in God's providence. The raven wing of war is co-worker with the dove of peace! The tempest strives not with the peaceful calm—they are linked together and work together although they seem to be in opposition. Look at our history. How many an event has seemed to be conflicting in its day that has worked out good for us? The strifes of barons and kings for mastery might have been thought to be likely to tread out the last spark of British liberty—but they did rather kindle the pile! The various rebellions of nations, the heaving of society, the strife of anarchy, the tumults of war—all, all these things—overruled by God, have but made the chariot of the church progress more mightily! They have not failed their predestinated purpose—"good for the people of God." I know, my brothers and sisters, it is very hard for you to believe this. "What?" you say, "I have been sick for many a day, and wife and children, dependent on my daily labor, are crying for food—will this work together for my good?" So says the word, my brother, and so shall you find it before long! "I have been in trade," says another, "and this commercial pressure has brought me exceedingly low and distressed me—is it for my good?" My brother, you are a Christian! I know you do not seriously ask the question—for you know the answer! He who said, "All things work to-

gether,” will soon prove to you that there is a harmony in the most discordant parts of your life. You shall find, when your biography is written, that the darkest page did but harmonize with the brightest one—that the dark and cloudy day was but a glorious foil to set forth the brighter noontide of your joy! “All things work together.” There is never a clash in the world—men think so—but it never is so. The charioteers of the Roman circus might with much cleverness and art, with glowing wheels—avoid each other. But God, with infinitely consummate skill, guides the fiery coursers of man’s passion, yokes the storm, bits the tempest, and keeping each clear of the other from seeming evil, still develops good and better still! And better still in infinite progression.

We must understand the word, “together,” in another sense. “All things work *together* for good”—that is to say, *none of them work separately*. I remember an old divine using a very pithy and homely metaphor which I shall borrow today. He said, “All things work *together* for good, but perhaps any one of those ‘all things’ might destroy us if taken alone. The physician,” he says, “prescribes medicine. You go to the chemist, and he makes it up; there is something taken from this drawer, something from that vial, something from that shelf—any one of those ingredients, it is very possible, would be a deadly poison, and kill you outright if you should take it separately. But he puts one into the mortar, and then another, and then another, and he works them all up with his pestle, and makes a compound. He gives them all to you as a whole, and together they work for your good. But any one of the ingredients might either have operated fatally, or in a manner detrimental to your health.” Learn, then, that it is wrong to ask, concerning any particular act of providence, “Is this for my good?” Remember, it is not the one thing alone that is for your good—it is the one thing put with another thing, and that with a third, and that with a fourth, and all these mixed together that work for your good! Your being sick very probably might not be for *your* good only. God has something to follow your sickness—some blessed deliverance to follow your poverty and He knows that when He has mixed the different experiences of your life together they shall produce good for your soul and eternal good for your spirit! We know right well that there are many things that happen to us in our lives that would be the ruin of us if we were always to continue in the same condition. Too much joy would intoxicate us; too much misery would drive us to despair—but the joy and the misery, the battle and the victory, the storm and the calm—all these compounded make that sacred elixir whereby God makes all His people perfect through suffering. and leads them to ultimate happiness! “All things work *together* for good.”

3. Now we must take the next words. “All things work together *for good*.” Upon these two words the meaning of my text will hinge. There are

different senses to the word, "good." There is *the worldling's sense*—"Who will show us any good?"—by which he means *transient good*, the good of the moment. "Who will put honey into my mouth? Who will feed my belly with hidden treasures? Who will garnish my back with purple, and make my table groan with plenty?" That is "good"—the vat bursting with wine, the barn full of corn! Now God has never promised that "all things shall work together" for such good as that to His people! Very likely all things will work together in a contrary way to that! Expect *not*, O Christian, that all things will work together to make you rich! It is just possible they may all work to make you poor. It may be that all the different providences that shall happen to you will come wave upon wave, washing your fortune upon the rocks till it shall be wrecked. And then waves shall break over you till in that poor boat, the humble remnant of your fortune, you shall be out on the wide sea with none to help you but God the Omnipotent.

The Christian understands the word, "good," in another sense. By, "good," he understands *spiritual good*. "Ah," says he, "I do not call *gold* good, but I call *faith* good; I do not think it always for my good to increase in treasure, but I know it is good to grow in divine grace; I do not know that it is for my good that I should be respectable, and walk in good society, but I know that it is for my good that I should walk humbly with my God. I do not know that it is for my good that my children should be about me, like olive branches round my table—but I know that it is for my good that I should flourish in the courts of my God, and that I should be the means of winning souls from going down into the pit of hell! I am not certain that it is altogether for my good to have kind and generous friends with whom I may hold fellowship, but I know that it is for my good that I should hold fellowship with Christ, and that I should have communion with Him even though it should be in His sufferings; I know it is good for me that my faith, my love, my every grace should grow and increase, and that I should be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, my blessed Lord and Master." Well, Christian, you have got upon the meaning of the text, then! "All things work together," for *that kind* of good to God's people. "Well!" says one, "I don't think anything of that, then." No, perhaps you do not. It is not very likely swine would ever lift their heads from their troughs to think anything of stars! I do not much wonder that you should despise spiritual good, for you are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and the bonds of iniquity." You are a stranger to spiritual things, and let your despising of spiritual things teach you that you are not spiritual, and therefore, you cannot understand the spiritual—because it must be spiritually discerned! To the Christian, however, the highest good he can receive on earth is to grow in grace. "There!" he says, "I had rather be a bankrupt in business than I would be a bankrupt in

divine grace; let my fortune be decreased—better that than that I should backslide! Let Your waves and Your billows roll over me—better an ocean of trouble than a drop of sin! I would rather have Your rod a thousand times upon my shoulders, O my God, than I would once put out my hand to touch that which is forbidden, or allow my foot to run in the way of gainsayers.” The highest good a Christian has here is spiritual good!

And we may add, the text also means *good, eternal*, lasting good! All things work together for a Christian's lasting good! They all work to bring him to paradise—all work to bring him to the Savior's feet! “So He brings them to their desired haven,” said the psalmist—by storm and tempest, flood and hurricane. All the troubles of a Christian do but wash him nearer to heaven! The rough winds do but hurry his passage across the straits of this life to the port of eternal peace; all things work together for the Christian's eternal and spiritual good.

And yet I must say here, that sometimes all things work together for the Christian's *temporal good*. You know the story of old Jacob. “Joseph is not, Simeon is not and now you will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me,” said the old patriarch. But if he could have read God's secrets, he might have found that Simeon was not lost, for he was retained as a hostage—that Joseph was not lost but gone before to smooth the passage of his gray hairs into the grave, and that even Benjamin was to be taken away by Joseph in love to his brother! So that what *seemed* to be against him, even in temporal matters, was for him! You may have also heard the story of that eminent martyr who was always likely to say, “All things work together for good.” When he was seized by the officers of Queen Mary to be taken to the stake to be burned, he was treated so roughly on the road that he broke his leg. And they jeeringly said, “All things work together for good, do they? How will your broken leg work for your good?” “I don't know how it will,” he said, “but for my good I know it will work, and you shall see it so.” By God's grace it proved true that it was for his temporal good, for being delayed a day or so on the road through his lameness, he arrived in London in time enough to hear that Elizabeth was proclaimed queen, and so he escaped the stake by his broken leg! He turned round upon the men who carried him, as they thought to his death, and said to them, “Now will you believe that all things work together for good?” So that though I said the drift of the text was *spiritual good*, yet sometimes in the main current there may be carried some rich and rare *temporal* benefits for God's children as well as the richer spiritual blessings!

4. I am treating the text as you see, verbally. And now I must return to the word, “work”—to notice the tense of it. “All things *work* together for good.” It does not say that they *shall* work, or that they *have* worked—both of these are implied—but it says that they work *now*. All things at

this present moment are working together for the believer's good. I find it extremely easy to believe that all things *have* worked together for my good. I can look back at the past and wonder at all the ways whereby the Lord has led me. If there ever lived a man who has reason to be grateful to Almighty God, I think I am that man! I can see black storms that have lowered over my head and torrents of opposition that have run across my path, but I can thank God for every incident that ever occurred to me from my cradle up to now! And I do not desire a better pilot for the rest of my days than He who has steered me from obscurity and scorn to this place to preach His word, and feed this great congregation. And I doubt not that each of you, in looking back upon your past experience as Christians, could say very much the same. You have passed through many troubles, but you can say they have all been for your good. And somehow or other you have an equal faith for the future; you believe that all things *will* in the end work for your good! The pinch of faith always lies in the *present tense*. I can always believe the past, and always believe the future—but the present, the present, the *present*—that is what staggers faith! Now please notice that my text is in the present tense. “All things *work*”—at this very instant and second of time—however troubled, downcast, depressed, and despairing the Christian may be, all things are working for his good *now!* And though like Jonah he is brought to the bottom of the mountains, and he thinks the earth with her bars is about him forever—and the weeds of despair are wrapped about his head—even in the uttermost depths, all things are *now* working for his good! Here, I say again, is the pinch of faith. As an old countryman once said to me, from whom I gained many a pithy saying—“Ah, sir, I could always do wonders when there were no wonders to do! I feel, sir, that I could believe God. But then at the time I feel so, there is not much to believe.” And he just paraphrased it in his own dialect like this—“My arm is always strong, and my sickle always sharp when there is no harvest; and I think I could mow many an acre when there is no grass. But when the harvest is on, I am weak; and when the grass grows, then my scythe is blunt.” Have you not found it so too? You think you can do wondrous things. You say—

**“Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled—
Now I can smile at Satan's rage
And face a frowning world!”**

And now a little capful of wind blows on you and the tears run down your cheeks, and you say, “Lord, let me die; I am no better than my fathers.” You that were going to thrash mountains find that molehills cast you down!

It behooves each of us, then, to comfort and establish our hearts upon this word “work.” “All things work.” Merchant, though you have been

sorely pressed this week, and it is highly probable that next week will be still worse for you—believe that all things, even then are working for your good! It will cost you many a pang to keep that confidence, but oh, for your Master's honor, and for your own comfort, retain that consolation! Should your house of business threaten to tumble about your ears—as long as you have acted honorably—still bear your cross; it *shall* work—it *is* working for your good! This week, mother, you may see your first-born carried to the tomb; that bereavement is working for your good! O man, within a few days he that has eaten bread with you may lift up his heel against you; it shall work for your good! O you that are high in spirits today, you with the flashing eyes and joyous countenance—before the sun sets some evil shall befall you, and you shall be sad. Believe then that all things work together for your good—if you love God, and are called according to His purpose!

5. And now we close by noticing the *confidence* with which the apostle speaks. “A fiction!” says one. “A pleasant fiction, sir!” “Sentimentalism!” says another, “a mere poetic sentimentalism.” “Ah,” cries a third, “a downright lie!” “No,” says another, “there is some truth in it, certainly; men do get bettered by their afflictions, but it is a truth that is not valuable to me, for I do not realize the good that these things bring.” Gentlemen, the apostle Paul was well aware of your objections, and therefore mark how confidently he asserts the doctrine. He does not say, “I am persuaded.” He does not say, “I believe”; but with unblushing confidence he appears before you and says, “We” (I have many witnesses)—*we know* that all things work together.” What, Paul, are you saying? So strange and startling a doctrine as this asserted with such dogmatic impudence? What can you be saying? Hear his reply! “We know! In the mouth of two or three witnesses it shall all be established, but I have tens of thousands of witnesses!” “We know,” and the apostle lifts his hand to where the white-robed hosts are praising God forever—“These,” he says, “passed through great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—ask them!” And with united breath they reply, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Daniel—all the mighty ones that have gone before us—tell the tale of their history! They write their autobiography, and they say, “We!” It is proven to a demonstration in our own lives; it is a fact which runs like a golden clue through all the labyrinth of our history—“All things work together for good to them that love God.” “We,” says the apostle again—and he puts his hand upon his poor distressed brothers and sisters—he looks at his companions in the prison house at Rome! He looks at that humble band of teachers in Rome, in Philippi, in all the different parts of Asia, and he says, “We!” “We *know* it; it is not with us a matter of doubt; we have tried it, we have proved it.

Not only does faith believe it, but our own history convinces us of the truth of it!"

I might appeal to scores and hundreds here, and I might say, brothers and sisters, you with gray heads, rise up and speak. Is this true or not? I see the reverend man rise, leaning on his staff, and with the tears flooding his old cheeks, he says, "Young man it is true. I have proved it; even down to gray hairs I have proved it. He made, and He will carry; He will not desert His own!" Veteran! You have had many troubles, have you not? He replies, "Youth, troubles? I have had many troubles that you reckon not of! I have buried all my kindred, and I am like the last oak of the forest—all my friends have been felled by death long ago, yet I have been upheld till now—who could hold me up but my God?" Ask him whether God has been once untrue to him, and he will say, "No! Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised; all has come to pass!" Brothers and sisters, we can confidently say, then, hearing such a testimony as that, "*We know* that all things work." Besides, there are you of middle age, and even those of us who are young—the winter has not spared our branches, nor the lightning ceased to scathe our trunk, yet here we stand—preserved by conquering grace! Hallelujah to the grace that makes all things work together for good!

O my hearer, are you a believer in Christ? If not, I beseech you, stop and consider! Pause and think of your state; and if you know your own sinfulness this day, believe on Christ who came to save sinners, and that done, all things shall work for you—the tumbling avalanche, the rumbling earthquake, the tottering pillars of heaven—all, when they fall or shake, shall not hurt you, they shall still work out your good! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and you shall be saved," for so runs the gospel. The Lord bless you! Amen.

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LIGHT AT EVENING TIME

NO. 160

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 25, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light.”
Zechariah 14:7.*

I SHALL not stay to notice the particular occasion upon which these words were uttered, or to discover the time to which they more especially refer. I shall rather take the sentence as a rule of the kingdom of God, as one of the great laws of God’s dispensation of grace, that “at evening time it shall be light.” Whenever philosophers wish to establish a general law, they think it necessary to collect a considerable number of individual instances. These being put together, they then infer from them a general rule. Happily, this need not be done with regard to God. We have no need, when we look abroad in providence, to collect a great number of incidents and then from them infer the truth, for since God is Immutable, one act of His grace is enough to teach us the rule of His conduct. Now, I find in this one place it is recorded that on a certain occasion, during a certain adverse condition of a nation, God promised that “at evening time it should be light.” If I found that in any human writing, I would suppose that the thing might have occurred once, that a blessing was conferred in an emergency on a certain occasion, but I could not from it deduce a rule. But when I find this written in the book of God, that on a certain occasion when it was evening time with His people, God was pleased to give them light, I feel myself more than justified in deducing from it the rule—that always to His people at evening time there shall be light!

This, then, shall be the subject of my present discourse. There are different evening times that happen to the church and to God’s people and, as a rule, we may rest quite certain that at evening time there shall be light.

God very frequently acts in grace in such a manner that we can find a parallel in nature. For instance, God says, “As the rain comes down and the snow from heaven and returns not there, even so shall My word be. It shall not return unto Me void, it shall accomplish that which I please, it shall prosper in the thing whereto I have sent it.” We find Him speaking concerning the coming of Christ, “He shall come down like rain upon the

mown grass, as showers that water the earth.” We find Him likening the covenant of grace to the covenant which He made with Noah concerning the seasons and with man concerning the different revolutions of the year—“Seed-time and harvest and cold and heat and summer and winter and day and night shall not cease.” We find that the works of creation are very frequently the mirror of the works of grace and that we can draw figures from the world of nature to illustrate the great acts of God in the world of His grace towards His people. But sometimes God oversteps nature. In nature, after evening time there comes night. The sun has had its hours of journeying. The fiery steeds are weary. They must rest. Lo, they descend the azure steeps and plunge their burning hoofs in the western sea, while night in her black chariot follows at their heels. God, however, oversteps the rule of nature. He is pleased to send to His people times when the eye of reason expects to see no more day but fears that the glorious landscape of God’s mercies will be shrouded in the darkness of His forgetfulness—but instead thereof, God overleaps nature and declares that at evening time, instead of darkness—there shall be light!

It is now my business to illustrate this general rule by different particulars. I shall dwell most largely upon the last, that being the principal object of my sermon this morning.

1. To begin, then, “At evening time it shall be light.” The first illustration we take from *the history of the church at large*. The church at large has had many evening times. If I might derive a figure to describe her history from anything in this lower world, I would describe her as being like the sea. At times the abundance of grace has been gloriously manifest—wave upon wave has triumphantly rolled in upon the land, covering the mire of sin and claiming the earth for the Lord of hosts. So rapid has been its progress that its course could scarcely be obstructed by the rocks of sin and vice. Complete conquest seemed to be foretold by the continual spread of the gospel. The happy church thought that the day of her ultimate triumph had certainly arrived, so potent was her word by her ministers, so glorious was the Lord in the midst of her armies that nothing could stand against her! She was “fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners.” Heresies and schisms were swept away; false gods and idols lost their thrones! Jehovah omnipotent was in the midst of His church and He upon the white horse rode forth conquering and to conquer! Before long, however, if you read history, you find it always has happened that there came an ebb tide. Again the stream of grace seemed to recede; the poor church was driven back either by persecution or by internal decay. Instead of gaining upon man’s corruptions, it seemed as if man’s corruption gained on her and where once there had been righteousness like the waves of the sea, there was

then the black mud and mire of the filthiness of mankind! Mournful tunes the church had to sing when by the rivers of Babylon she sat down and wept, remembering her former glories and weeping her present desolation! So has it always been—progressing, retrograding, standing still awhile and then progressing once more and falling back again. The whole history of the church has been a history of onward marches and then of quick retreats—a history which I believe is, on the whole, a history of advance and growth but which read chapter by chapter, is a mixture of success and repulse, conquest and discouragement. And so I think it will be, even to the last. We shall have our sunrises, our meridian noon and then the sinking in the west. We shall have our sweet dawns of better days, our Reformations, our Luthers and our Calvins. We shall have our bright full noon tide when the gospel is fully preached and the power of God is known! We shall have our sunset of ecclesiastical weakness and decay. But just as sure as the eventide seems to be drawing over the church, “at evening time it shall be light.” Mark well that truth of God all through the sacred history of the church. In the day when every lamp of prophecy seemed to have ceased, when he who once thundered in the streets of Rome was burned at the stake and strangled—when Savonarola had departed and his followers had been put to confusion and the black clouds of Popery seemed to have quenched the sunlight of God’s love and grace upon the world—in those dark dim ages when the gospel seemed to have died out, no doubt Satan whispered to himself—“The church’s sunset is now come. It is evening time with her. Only a few rays are struggling from the sun of righteousness to cheer the darkness.” Satan thought maybe the world would lie forever beneath the darkness of his dragon wing. But lo, at evening time it was light! God brought forth the solitary monk that shook the world! He raised up men to be His assistants and helpers; the sun rose in Germany; it shone in every land—nor have we ever had an eventide so near to darkness since that auspicious time.

Yet there have been other seasons of dark foreboding. There was a time when the Church of England was sound asleep; when the various bodies of Dissenters were quite as bad; when religion degenerated into a dead formality—when no life and no power could be found in any pulpit throughout the land. There was a time when an earnest man was so rare that he was almost a miracle! Good men stood over the ruins of our Zion and said, “Alas, alas, for the slain of the daughter of my people! Where, where are the days of the mighty Puritans who with the banner of the truth in their hands crushed a lie beneath their feet? O truth, you have departed. You have died.” “No,” says God, “it is evening time. And now it shall be light.” There were six young men at Oxford who met together to

pray. Those six young men were expelled for being too godly. They went abroad throughout our land, and the little leaven leavened the whole lump. Whitefield, Wesley, and their immediate successors flashed over the land like lightning in a dark night, making all men wonder from where they came and who they were! And working so great a work both in and out of the Establishment [Church of England], the gospel came to be preached with power and vigor! At evening time God has always been pleased to send His light to His church!

We may expect to see darker evening times than have ever been beheld. Let us not imagine that our civilization shall be more enduring than any other that has gone before it unless the Lord shall preserve it. It may be that the suggestion will be realized which has often been laughed at as folly, that one day men should sit upon the broken arches of London Bridge and marvel at the civilization that has departed, just as men walk over the mounds of Nimrod and marvel at cities buried there! It is just possible that all the civilization of this country may die out in blackest night—it may be that God will repeat again the great story which has been so often told—“I looked and lo, in the vision I saw a great and terrible beast and it ruled the nations but lo, it passed away and was not.” But if ever such things should be—if the world should ever have to return to barbarism and darkness—if instead of a constant progress to the brightest day, all our hopes should be blasted, let us rest quite satisfied that “at evening time there shall be light.” That the end of the world’s history shall not be an end of God’s glory! However red with blood, however black with sin the world may yet be, she shall one day be as pure and perfect as when she was created! The day shall come when this poor planet shall find herself unrobed of those swaddling bands of darkness that have kept her luster from breaking forth. God shall yet cause His name to be known from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof—

**“And the shout of jubilee,
Loud as mighty thunders roar,
Or the fullness of the sea
When it breaks upon the shore,
Shall yet be heard the wide world over.”**

“At evening time it shall be light.”

II. This rule holds equally good *in the little*, as well as *in the great*. We know that in nature the very same law that rules the atom, governs also the starry orbs—

**“The very law that molds a tear
And bids it trickle from its source—
That law preserves the earth a sphere
And guides the planets in their course.”**

It is even so with the laws of grace: “At evening time it shall be light” to the church; “at evening time it shall be light” to every individual. Christian, let us descend to lowly things! You have had your bright days in temporal matters—you have sometimes been greatly blessed—you can remember the day when the calf was in the stall, when the olive yielded its fruit and the fig tree did not deny its harvest. You can recollect the years when the barn was almost bursting with the corn and when the vat overflowed with the oil. You remember when the stream of your life was deep and your ship floated softly on without one disturbing billow of trouble to molest it. You said in those days, “I shall see no sorrow. God has hedged me about. He has preserved me; He has kept me—I am the darling of His providence—I know that all things work together for my good, for I can see it is plainly so.” Well, Christian, you have after that had a sunset. The sun which shone so brightly began to cast his rays in a more oblique manner every moment until at last the shadows were long—for the sun was setting and the clouds began to gather! And though the light of God’s countenance tinged those clouds with glory, yet it was waxing dark. Then troubles lowered over you. Your family sickened, your wife was dead, your crops were meager and your daily income was diminished. Your cupboard was no fuller; you were wondering for your daily bread; you did not know what should become of you, maybe you were brought very low. The keel of your vessel did grate upon the rocks. There was not enough of bounty to float your ship above the rocks of poverty! “I sink in deep mire,” you said, “where there is no standing. All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me.” What to do, you could not tell. Strive as you might, your strivings did but make you worse! “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” You used both industry and economy and you added thereunto perseverance. But all in vain! It was in vain that you rose up early and sat up late and ate the bread of carefulness. You could do nothing to deliver yourself, for all your attempts failed. You were ready to die in despair! You thought the night of your life had gathered with eternal blackness. You would not live always but had rather depart from this vale of tears! Christian, bear witness to the truth of the maxim of the text! Was it not light with you at evening time? The time of your extremity was just the moment of God’s opportunity—when the tide had run out to its very furthest, then it began to turn—your ebb had its flow! Your winter had its summer! Your sunset had its sunrise! “At evening time it was light.” Suddenly by some strange work of God, as you did think it then, you were completely delivered! He brought out your righteousness like the light and your glory as the noonday. The Lord appeared for you as in the days of old! He stretched out His hand from above. He drew you out of

deep waters. He set you upon a rock and established your goings. Mark, then, O heir of heaven! What has been true to you in the years that are past shall be true to you even till the last! Are you this day exercised with woe and care and misery? Be of good cheer! In your “evening time it shall be light.” If God chooses to prolong your sorrow, He shall multiply your patience! But it may be He will bring you into the deeps and from there will He lead you up again! Remember your Savior descended that He might ascend—so must you also stoop to conquer! And if God bids you stoop, should it be to the very lowest hell, remember, if He bade you stoop, He will bring you up again! Remember what Jonah said—“Out of the belly of hell cried I and You heard me.” Oh, exclaim with him of old, who trusted in God when he had nothing else to trust—“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.” Do so and be blessed, for “at evening time it shall be light.”

III. But now we seek a third illustration from *the spiritual sorrows of God’s own people*. God’s children have two kinds of trials—temporal trials and spiritual trials. I shall be brief on this point and shall borrow an illustration from good John Bunyan. You remember John Bunyan’s description of Apollyon meeting Christian? Bunyan tells it figuratively but it is no figure—he that has ever met Apollyon will tell you that there is no mistake about the matter but that there is a dread reality in it! Our Christian met Apollyon when he was in the valley of humiliation, and the dragon did most fiercely beset him. With fiery darts he sought to destroy him and take away his life. The brave Christian stood up to him with all his might and used his sword and shield right manfully till his shield became studded with a forest of darts and his hand did cleave unto his sword! You remember how for many an hour that man and that dragon fought together, till at last the dragon gave Christian a horrible fall and down he went upon the ground. And woe was the day! At the moment when he fell he dropped his sword! You have but to picture the scene—the dragon drawing up all his might, planting his foot upon the Christian’s neck and about to hurl the fiery dart into his heart! “Aha, I have you now,” he says! “You are in my power.” Strange to say, “At evening time it was light.” At the very moment when the dragon’s foot was enough to crush the very life out of poor Christian, it is said he did stretch out his hand—he grasped his sword and giving a desperate thrust at the dragon, he cried, “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, for when I fall I shall arise again.” And so desperately did he cut the dragon that he spread his wings and flew away and Christian went on his jour-

ney rejoicing in his victory! Now, the Christian understands all that. It is no dream to him. He has been under the dragon's foot many a time. Ah, and all the world put on a man's heart at once is not equal in weight to one foot of the devil! When Satan once gets the upper hand of your spirit, he neither lacks strength, nor will, nor malice to torment it! Hard is that man's lot who has fallen beneath the hoof of the evil one in his fight with him! But blessed be God, the child of God is always safe—as safe beneath the dragon's foot as he shall be before the throne of God in heaven! “At evening time it shall be light.” Let all the powers of earth and hell and all the doubts and fears that the Christian ever knew conspire together to molest a saint—in that dark moment, lo—God shall arise and His enemies shall be scattered and He shall get unto Himself the victory! Oh, for faith to believe that! Oh, for confidence in God never to doubt Him but in the dark moment of our sorrows still to feel all is well with us! “At evening time it shall be light.”

IV. Bear with me while I just hint at one more particular and then I will come to that upon which I intend to dwell mainly at the last. To *the sinner when coming to Christ* this is also a truth of God—“At evening time it shall be light.” Very often when I am sitting to see inquirers, persons have come to me to tell me the story of their spiritual history. And they tell me their little tale with an air of the greatest possible wonder and ask me as soon as they have told it whether it is not extremely strange! “Do you know, sir, I used to be so happy in the things of the world but conviction entered into my heart and I began to seek the Savior. And do you know that for a long time sir, when I was seeking the Savior, I was so miserable that I could not stand myself? Surely sir, this is a strange thing.” And when I have looked them in the face and said, “No, it is not strange. Do you know I have had a dozen here tonight and they have all told me the same? That is the way all God's people go to heaven.” They have stared at me as if they did not think I would tell them an untruth, but as if they thought it the strangest thing in the entire world that anybody else should have felt as they have felt! “Now, sit down,” I sometimes say, “and I will tell you what were my feelings when I first sought the Savior.” “Why, sir,” they say, “that is just how I felt but I did not think anyone ever went the same path that I have gone.” Ah, well, it is no wonder that when we hold little acquaintance with each other in spiritual things our path should seem to be solitary! But he who knows much of the dealings of God with poor seeking sinners will know that their experience is always very much alike and you can generally tell one by another while they are coming to Christ. Now, whenever the soul is truly seeking Christ it will have to seek Him in the dark. When poor Lot ran out of Sodom, he had to run all the way in the twilight. The sun did not rise

upon him until he got into Zoar. And so when sinners are running from their sins to the Savior, they have to run in the dark. They get no comfort and no peace till they are enabled by simple faith to look for all to Him who died upon the cross! I have in my presence this morning many poor souls under great distress. Poor heart! My text is a comfort to you. "At evening time it shall be light." You had a little light, once—the light of morality. You thought you could do something for yourself. That is now all cut out. Then you had another light—you had the wax taper of ceremonies, and you thought full sure that it would light you; but now that is all out. Still you thought you could grope your way a little by the remaining twilight of your good works, but all that seems to have gone now. You think, "God will utterly destroy such a wretch as I am! O sir! O sir!—

'I the chief of sinners am.'

There never lived a wretch so vile. Or if there ever lived such a one, surely God must have cast him into hell at once! I am certain there is no hope for me. Why, sir, do what I may, I cannot make myself any better! When I try to pray, I find I can't pray as I should like. When I read the Bible, it is all black against me. It is no use! When I go to the house of God, the minister seems to be like Moses—only preaching the law to me—he never seems to have a word of comfort to my soul." Well, I am glad of it, poor Heart. I am glad of it! Far be it from me to rejoice in your miseries as such, but I am glad you are where you are! I remember what the Countess of Huntingdon once said to Mr. Whitefield's brother. Mr. Whitefield's brother was under great distress of mind, and one day, when sitting at tea, talking of spiritual things, he said, "Your Ladyship, I know I am lost; I am certain I am!" Well, she talked to him and she tried to rally him. But he persisted in it, that he was absolutely undone, that he was a lost man. Her Ladyship clapped her hands, and said, "I am glad of it, Mr. Whitefield, I'm glad of it!" He thought it was a cruel thing for her to say. He knew better when she explained herself by saying, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. So, then, He came to seek and to save *you*." Now, if there are any here who are lost, I can only say I am glad of it, too—for such the mighty Shepherd came to rescue! If there are any of you who feel that you are condemned by God's law, I thank God you are, for those who are condemned by the law in their consciences shall yet be pardoned by the gospel—

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

Now, this very hour, when you have no day in your heart; when you think the evening time has come and you must perish forever—now is the time when God will reveal Himself to you! While you have a rag of

your own, you shall never have Christ! While you have a farthing of your own righteousness, you shall never have Him! But when you are *nothing*, Christ is yours! When you have nothing of yourself to trust to, Jesus Christ in the gospel is your complete Savior! He bids me tell you He came to seek and to save such as you are!

V. And now I am about to close, dwelling rather more largely upon the last particular—"At evening time it shall be light." If our sun does not go down before it is noon, we may all of us expect to have an evening time of life. Either we shall be taken from this world by death, or else, if God should spare us, before long we shall get to the evening of life. In a few more years, the withered and yellow leaf will be the fit companion of every man and every woman. Is there anything melancholy in that? I think not. The time of old age, with all its infirmities, seems to me to be a time of peculiar blessedness and privilege to the Christian! To the worldly sinner, whose zest for pleasure has been removed by the weakening of his powers and the decay of his strength, old age must be a season of tedium and pain. But to the veteran soldier of the cross, old age must assuredly be a time of great joy and blessedness! I was thinking the other evening, while riding in a delightful country, how like the evening time old age is. The sun of hot care has gone down. That sun which shone upon that early piety of ours, which had not much depth of root and which scorched it so that it died. That sun which scorched our true godliness and often made it well-near wither and would have withered it, had it not been planted by the rivers of water. That sun is now set. The good old man now has no particular care in the entire world! He says to business, to the hum and noise and strife of the age in which he lives, "You are nothing to me. To make my calling and election sure—to hold firmly my confidence and wait until my change comes—this is all my employment. With all your worldly pleasures and cares I have no connection." The toil of his life is all done; he now has no more to be sweating and toiling as he had in his youth and manhood; his family has grown up, and are no more dependent upon him. It may be God has blessed him, and he has sufficient for the needs of his old age; or it may be that in some rustic almshouse he breathes out the last few years of his existence. How calm and quiet! Like the laborer who when he returns from the field at evening time casts himself upon his couch, so does the old man rest from his labors! And at evening time we gather into families, the fire is kindled, the curtains are drawn, and we sit around the family fire to think no more of the things of the great rumbling world. And even so in old age—the family—not the world is the engrossing topic!

Did you ever notice how venerable grandparents, when they write a letter, fill it full of intelligence concerning their children? "John is well."

“Mary is ill.” “All our family is in health.” Very likely some business friend writes to say, “Stocks are down,” or, “the rate of interest is raised.” But you never find that in any good old man’s letters! He writes about his family, his lately married daughters, and all that; just what we do at evening time. We only think of the family circle and forget the world—and that is what the gray-headed old man does; he thinks of his children and forgets all beside. Well, then, how sweet it is to think that for such an old man there is light in the darkness! “At evening time it shall be light.” Dread not your days of weariness, dread not your hours of decay, O soldier of the cross! New lights shall burn when the old lights are quenched! New candles shall be lit when the lamps of life are dim! Fear not! The night of your decay may be coming on, but, “at evening time it shall be light.” At evening time the Christian has many lights that he never had before—lit by the Holy Spirit and shining by His light! There is the light of a bright experience; he can look back and he can raise his Ebenezer saying, “Here, by Your help, I’ve come.” He can look back at his old Bible, the light of his youth, and he can say, “This promise has been proved to me; this covenant has been proved true; I have thumbed my Bible many a year; I have never yet thumbed a broken promise; the promises have all been kept to me—‘not one good thing has failed.’” And then if he has served God, he has another light to cheer him—he has the light of the remembrance of what good God has enabled him to do! Some of his spiritual children come in and talk of times when God blessed his conversation to their souls. He looks upon his children, and his children’s children, rising up to call the Redeemer blessed. At evening time he has a light. But at the last, the night comes in real earnest—he has lived long enough and he must die. The old man is on his bed. The sun is going down and he has no more light. “Throw up the windows, let me look for the last time into the open sky,” says the old man. The sun has gone down. “I cannot see the mountains yonder. They are all a mass of mist—my eyes are dim and the world is dim, too.” Suddenly a light shoots across his face and he cries, “O daughter! Daughter! I can see another sun rising! Did you not tell me that the sun went down just now? Lo, I see another! And where those hills used to be in the landscape, those hills that were lost in darkness, daughter; I can see hills that seem like burning brass! And I think upon that summit I can see a city bright as jasper! Yes, and I see a gate opening and spirits coming forth! What is that they say? O they sing! They sing! Is this death?” And before he has asked the question, he has gone where he needs not to answer it, for death is all unknown. Yes, he has passed the gates of pearl; his feet are on the streets of gold! His head is bedecked with the crown of immortali-

ty! The palm branch of eternal victory is in his hand. God has accepted him in the beloved—

***“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in,”***

he is numbered with the saints in light, and the promise is fulfilled: “At evening time it shall be light.”

And now, my gray-headed hearer, will it be so with you? I remember the venerable Mr. Jay once in Cambridge, when preaching, reaching out his hand to an old man who sat just as some of you are sitting there, and saying, “I wonder whether those gray hairs are a crown of glory or a fool’s cap? They are one or else the other.” For a man to be unconverted at the age to which some of you have attained is indeed to have a fool’s cap made of gray hairs! But if you have a heart consecrated to Christ—to be His children now, with the full belief that you shall be His, forever—that is to have a crown of glory upon your brows!

And now, young men and maidens, we shall soon be old. In a little time our youthful frame shall totter—we shall need a staff, by-and-by. Years are short things. They seem to us to get shorter as each one of them runs over our head. My brothers and sisters, you are young as I am. Have you a hope that your eventide shall be light? No, you have begun in drunkenness! And the drunkard’s eventide is darkness made more dark—and after it damnation! No, you have begun your life with profanity and the swearer’s eventide has no light except the lurid flame of hell! Beware of such an eventide as that! No, you have begun in gaiety; take care lest that which begins in gaiety ends in eternal sadness! Would to God we had all begun with Christ; would that you would choose wisdom; for “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” Some religious men are miserable. But religion does not make them so. True religion is a happy thing. I never knew what the hearty laugh and what the happy face meant till I knew Christ! But knowing Him I trust I can live in this world like one who is not of it but who is happy in it. Keeping my eyes upward to the Savior, I can say with David, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name.” And I can bless Him most of all for this—that I know how to bless Him! Ah, and if you, in your prime, in the days of your youth, have been enabled by the Holy Spirit to consecrate yourselves to God, you will, when you come to the end, look back with some degree of sorrow upon your infirmities, but with a far greater degree of joy you will look upon the grace which began with you in childhood; which preserved you in manhood; which matured you for your old age, and which at last gathered you like a shock of corn fully ripe into the garner! May the great God

and Master bless these words to us each, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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THE SECURITY OF THE CHURCH

NO. 161

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 1, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever.”
Psalm 125:2.

THE changes of society may well illustrate the immutability of God. In the days of David, Jerusalem was looked upon as an impregnable fortress. It is surrounded by a natural rampart of hills, and appears to lie in the center of an amphitheatre raised purposely for its defense. By the ancient Jew it was considered to be an impregnable citadel. How changed now are the manners of war! A small troop could easily take the city, and it must indeed be a strong army that would be able to garrison it in its present condition. Yet while Jerusalem is changed, and the figure has become inappropriate, Jerusalem's God remains the same, for with Him is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” We must this morning consider the text, not as we would understand it in *our* day, but as we would have understood it in David's time. David looked upon the city of Jerusalem and he thought within himself, “No army can ever be able to surprise this city and however numerous may be the invading hosts; my people will always be able to hold their own in the midst of a city so firmly fortified both by Nature and by God.” In his time, indeed, and in the time of his son, Solomon, I suppose it would have been utterly impossible for any enemy, possessed only of the tactics of ancient warfare, to have scaled those mighty ramparts of earth which God had piled about the city. Therefore, when David said in his day, “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people,” he meant this—“As Jerusalem is fortified by the mountains, so are God's people castled in the covenant, fortified in the Omnipotence of God, and therefore, they are impregnablely secure.”

We shall thus understand the text and endeavor this morning to work out the great thought of the security of God's people in the arms of Jehovah, their Lord. We shall consider the text, first, *as relating to the Church as a whole* and then we shall endeavor to note *how it applies to every individual in particular*.

I. FIRST, THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE is secured by God beyond the reach of harm. She is ably garrisoned by Omnipotence and she is castled

within the faithful engagements of the covenant. How often has the Church been attacked? But how often has she been victorious? The number of her battles is just the number of her victories! Foes have come against her. They have compassed her about, they have compassed her about like bees—but in the name of God she has destroyed them! The bull of Bashan and the dog of Belial, the mighty and the insignificant, have all conspired to overthrow the Church, but He that sits in heaven has laughed at them! The Lord has had them in derision and His Church has been as Mount Zion which cannot be removed but which abides forever. Turn now to the roll of history and read how the Church has been fortified by God when fiercely attacked by men.

1. *Persecution* has unsheathed its bloody sword and sought to rend up the Church by its roots, or fell it with its axe. Tyrants have heated their furnaces, have prepared their racks, have erected their stakes. The martyrs of Christ have been dragged by thousands to a terrible death. The confessors have had to stand forth at the risk of their lives, protesting the gospel of God against the dominant of the times. The little flock has been scattered here and there and the dogs of persecution have worried them in every corner where they have fled. Into every nation of the earth have they wandered! In sheepskins and goatskins have they been clothed. Their houses have been in the rocks and their sleeping places in the caves of the earth. Like the stag pursued by the hounds, they have not had a moment's space for so much as to take their breath, but has the Church been subdued? Has she ever been overcome? O God, You have proved the invincibility of Your truth. You have manifested the power of Your Word, for You have not only preserved Your Church in the time of greatest trouble, but, blessed be Your name, you have made the hour of her peril the hour of her greatest triumph! Whenever the Church has been the most persecuted, she has been the most successful! The heathen Pro-consuls wondered when they saw the many who were prepared to die. They said, "Surely madness must have seized upon mankind that they cannot be content to commit suicide, but are so fond of death that they must come to our bar, and plead that they are lovers of Christ as if they sought to compel us to execute them." God gave divine grace for the moment and in the day of persecution He braced the nerves of His people and made them mighty to do or die, as God would have it! But surely, had not Christ's Church been surrounded by the mountains of God's Omnipotence, she would have fallen prey to her numerous enemies.

2. But by-and-by the devil grew wiser. He saw that overt persecution would not suffice for the putting down of God's Church and he, therefore, adopted another measure not less cruel but more crafty. "I will not only slay them," said he, "I will *malign* them." Did you ever read in history the

horrible reports which were set afloat in the early ages of Christianity concerning the Christians? I dare not tell you with what vices the early Christians were charged in their private assemblies. It is certain that they were the purest and most virtuous of men but never were men so fearfully belied! The very heathens who reveled in vice despised the followers of Jesus on account of crimes which the voice of the liar had laid to their charge! A few years elapsed and the mud which had been cast upon the snow-white garments of Christ's Church fell off them, leaving them whiter than before—the clouds that sought to obscure the light of the heaven of the gospel were blown away and "fair as the moon and clear as the sun"—the innocence of Christ's Church shone forth again! But the devil has adopted the same plan in every period. He has always sought to slander any race of Christians who are the means of revival. I would not believe any minister to be eminently successful if I were informed that everybody praised him—I am certain that such a case would be an exception—a glaring exception to all the rules of history! You remember what was said of Whitefield in his day—he was charged with crimes that Sodom never knew—and yet a more pure and heavenly man God never sent to tread this wicked earth! And it will always be so. The Church struggling with sin and wickedness must, through the enmity of the evil one, find herself bespattered and besmeared with slander. The wicked, when they can do nothing else against the righteous, will spit lies on them! But has the Church suffered through their slander, or has ever a solitary Christian lost anything by it? No, the Lord God who surrounded Jerusalem with mountains has so surrounded His people with Himself that no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper and every tongue that rises against us in judgment we shall condemn! This is the heritage of the people of the Lord! Fear not, O Church of Christ, the slimy serpent of slander—for even in your cradle, like Hercules, when the marks of slander came against you—you did slay them in your infantile grasp more than a conqueror through Him that loved you! And now that God is with you, and the shout of a king in your midst, fear not though all men should speak against you—your Master will yet honor you and you will come up from the pool of slander like a sheep from the washing—the fairer for your black baptism, the more admired, the more lovely for all the scorn and ignominy that men have cast upon you!

3. Again, Satan learned wisdom, and he said, "Now, inasmuch as I cannot destroy this people, neither by sword nor slander, lo, I will do this—I will send into their midst wolves in sheep's clothing! I will inspire many different *heretics*, carried away with their own lusts, who shall in the midst of the church promulgate lies and prophesy smooth things in the name of the Lord. And Satan has done all this with a vengeance! In every era of the church there have been numberless bands of heretics;

only a small company have in certain times adhered to the truth of God, while the mass of professing Christians have gone aside, and have perished in the gainsaying of Korah. Look at the earliest days of Christianity; scarcely were the apostles in their graves, and their souls in paradise than there sprang up men who denied the Lord that bought them—some who did evil that good might come—whose damnation was just. Heresies of all kinds began to spring up, even in the first 50 years after the departure of our Master. Since that time the world has been very prolific of every shape and form of doctrine except the truth! And down to these modern times heresies have prevailed. Now behold how Satan seeks to quench the light of Israel. There is the heresy of Rome; she who sits upon many waters seeks as far as she can to delude the Church and to draw the rest of the world aside from the truth of God. She, with all the craft of hell, seeks to proselyte wherever she may from those who are the professed followers of the gospel. She will change her shape in every land. In her own dominions she will build the dungeon and practice intolerance. In a land of freedom she can plead for liberty and pretend to be its warmest friend. Base harlot that she is, her whoredom has not yet ceased, nor is the cup of her fornications full—she still seeks to devour the nations and swallow them up! There is her sister, the Puseyism of the Church of England. I speak nothing now concerning my evangelical brothers; may God Almighty shield them and bless them! My only marvel is that they do not come out altogether and touch not the unclean thing! But, alas, Puseyism is seeking to eat out the very vitals of our godliness, telling the masses that the priest is everything—putting down Christ and exalting the man! They are putting baptismal water in the place of the influences of the divine Spirit, and exalting sacraments into the place which is only to be held by the Lord our God! Truly this dangerous and deceptive, beautiful and foolish system of religion is much to be feared—although we know that the true Church of God will always be safe—for against her the gates of hell shall not prevail.

Alas, that we should have to say something else—and this concerning those who are commonly called evangelicals, who have a form of error more insidious and evil! Alas that I should have to “cry aloud and spare not,” concerning these matters! These are days when a false charity would have us hold our tongues against the evils that we hate! My brothers and sisters, in the midst of our dissenting churches there is a system which does not deserve the name of, “system,” except from its systematic desire to crush every system! There is a system springing up which takes out of the gospel every truth that makes it precious! It plucks every jewel out of the crown of the Redeemer and tramples it under the foot of men! In a large number of our pulpits at this time you will not hear the gospel preached in a month all together. Anything else you like, you may hear

preached: Anti-state Churchism, political affairs—these are the current staple of the day! Christ and Him crucified may go to the dogs for them. Politics fill up the pulpits and philosophy stands in the place of theology. And when there is a little theology, what do they say? Instead of exalting the Holy Spirit as the first and prime agent, they are always exhorting men to do what only God's Spirit can do for them, and not reminding them that the effectual grace of God is necessary. The covenant, the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure" is sneered at! The banner once held so manfully by Calvin, who took it from the hand of Augustine leaping over centuries to grasp it, who again received it from the hand of the apostle Paul—the banner of the old fashioned truth of God is, to a great degree, furled; and we are told that these old doctrines are ineffectual and out of date! Puritan divinity, they say, is not the divinity for these times; we must have a new gospel for a go-ahead era! We must have sermons preached which, if they are not the absolute denial of every doctrine of the gospel, at least sneer at them all! The man effects to be so supremely wise that he, in his own brain, can devise a gospel better and fairer than the ancient gospel of the blessed God! Now, this is one of the attempts of the enemy to put down the truth but he will never be able to do it, for, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people, from henceforth even forever."

I will not be hard, but I must say a word to many of my brothers of the denomination to which I belong. There are many of you who call yourselves Particular Baptists, by which you mean that you are Calvinists. And yet, gentlemen, your consciences are easy, and some of you have never preached upon election since you were ordained! The peculiarities of "the five points" are concealed; these things, you say, are offensive, and so, gentlemen, you would rather offend God than you would offend man! But you reply, "These things, you know, are high doctrines; they had better not be preached—they will not be practical." I think that the climax of all man's blasphemy is centered in that utterance! Will you dare to say, "There are some parts of God's truth that we do not need to preach to the people"? Tell me that God put a thing in the Bible that I am not to preach! You are finding fault with my God! But you say, "It will be dangerous." What? God's truth dangerous? I should not like to stand in your shoes when you have to face your Maker on the day of judgment after such an utterance as that! If it is not God's truth, let it alone! But if you believe the thing, out with it! The world will like you just as well for being honest, and if the world does not, your Master will! Keep back nothing. Preach the whole gospel! Preach man's responsibility—do not stutter at it! Preach divine sovereignty! Do not refuse to talk of election—to use the word even if they sneer! Tell men that if they believe not, the blood is on their own heads, and then if the high people turn against

you, snap your finger in their face! Tell them you do not care—that to you it is *nothing*—*nothing* at all to please man—your Master is in heaven, and you will please Him, come fair, come foul! This done, Satan would be balked and defeated; but at the present moment he is mightily striving thus to overthrow the church by evil doctrines!

4. The craftiest invention of the devil, with which he seeks in the last place to put out the church, is a device which has amazed me above every other. “Now,” says Satan, “if I can quench the church, neither by persecution, nor slander, nor heresy—I will invent another mode of destroying her.” And I have often marveled at the depths of deceit which are centered in this last invention of Satan. Satan seeks to divide the church, to set us apart from one another, and not allow those who love the same truths to meet with each other to work together in love, and peace, and harmony. “Now,” says the devil, “I have it! Here is one body of good men—they are very fond of one part of God’s truth. Now, there are two sets of truths in the Bible. One set deals with man as responsible creature, the other class of truths deals with God as the infinite Sovereign, dispensing His mercy as He pleases. Now these dear brothers are very fond of man’s responsibility—they will preach it, and they will preach it so that if they hear the brother on the other side of the street preach God’s sovereignty, they will be very upset with him. And then I will make the brothers who preach divine sovereignty forget the other part of the truth, and hate the brothers who preach it.” Do you not see the craft of the enemy? Both of these good men are right; they both preach parts of the truth of God, but they each so set their part of truth at the top of the other that a rivalry commences! Why, I have stepped in and heard a godly brother preach a sermon that sent my blood through my veins at a most rapid rate while he earnestly preached of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come! But he spoilt all his sermon by indirectly hinting—“Now, take care you don’t hear Mr. So-and-So, because he will contradict all this, and tell you that you are saved by divine grace, and that it is not of yourself, but it is the gift of God.” I went, of course, and heard the good man because I was told not to go! Well, he was preaching that, “It is not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,” and I thought he handled the text very manfully when he showed that God was the Author of all salvation. Only in a parenthesis he told us not to go to that work-mongering shop on the other side of the road! Why, they were both right, but they had each got different parts of the truth—one, that truth which dealt with man as responsible—the other, that which deals with God as a Sovereign! And the devil had so perverted their judgment that they could not see that both things were true, but they must go fighting each other just to make sport for Satan! Now, I wonder that the church has not been utterly destroyed by this last device, for it is the

craftiest thing I believe, that Satan has yet brought under our notice—though without doubt his depths are too deep for our understanding. But, brothers and sisters, despite all this, let bigotry rave, let intolerance rail till it goes mad—the church is just as secure, for God has set Himself round about her—“even as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, from henceforth even forever.”

And now just notice, before we leave this point, that as the church always has been preserved, the text assures us she always will be, *henceforth even forever*. There is a nervous old woman here. Last Saturday night she read the newspaper, and she saw something about five or six clergymen going over to Rome; she laid down her spectacles and she began crying, “Oh, the church is in danger, the church is in danger!” Ah, put your spectacles back on! That is all right—never mind about the loss of those fellows. Better gone! We did not need them; do not cry if 50 more follow them; do not be at all alarmed! Some church may be in danger, but *God’s Church* is not—that is safe enough, that shall stand secure, even to the end! I remember with what alarm some of my friends received the tidings of the geological discoveries of modern times which did not quite agree with their interpretation of the Mosaic history of the creation. They thought it an awful thing that science should discover something which seemed to contradict the Scriptures! Well, we lived over the geological difficulty, after all, and since then there have been different sets of philosophic infidels who have risen up and made wonderful discoveries, and poor timid Christians have thought, “What a terrible thing! This surely will be the end of all true religion! When science can bring *facts* against us, how shall we be able to stand?” They just waited about another week, and all of a sudden they found that science was not their enemy, but their friend, for the truth, though tried in a furnace like silver seven times, is always a gainer by the trial! Ah, you that hate the church, she shall always be a thorn in your side! Oh, you that would batter her walls to pieces know this—that she is impregnable—not one of her stakes shall be removed, not one of her cords shall be broken! God has fixed her where she is, and by divine decree established her on a rock. Do you hate the church? Hate on—it will never be moved by all your hate! Do you threaten to crush it? It shall crush you, but you shall never injure it! Do you despise and laugh at it? Ah, the day is coming when the laugh shall be on the other side; wait a little while, and when her Master shall suddenly come in His glory, then shall it be seen on whose side is the victory, and who were the fools who laughed!

Thus we have disposed of the first point—THE CHURCH impreguably secure, fortified, and castled by God.

II. What is true of the mass is true of the unit. The fact which relates to the church includes in it EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH. God

has fortified His people so that every believer is infallibly secure! There are in the world certain people who teach that Christ gives grace to men and tells them, "Now, you shall be saved if you will persevere. But this must be left to yourself." This reminds me of an old Puritan illustration—"The Duke of Alva having given some prisoners their lives, they afterwards petitioned him for some food. His answer was that, 'he would grant them life but no meat.' And they starved to death." The deniers of *final perseverance* represent the Deity in a similar view—"God promises eternal life to the saints if they endure to the end, but He will not grant to them the continuance of that divine grace without which eternal life cannot be had." Oh, surely if that were true, eternal life would not be worth a fig to any of us! Unless our God who first saves us did engage to keep us alive, and to provide for all our necessities, of what use were eternal life at all? But we bless His name—

***"Whom once He loves He never leaves,
But loves them to the end!
Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever!"***

The Christian is fortified and secured from all harm. And yet, O Child of God, there are many who will seek to destroy you—and your fears will often tell you that you are in the jaws of the enemy! *Providence* will often seem against you, your eyes shall be seldom dry. It may be funeral shall follow funeral; loss shall follow loss; a burning house shall be succeeded by a blasted crop! The Christian in this world is not secured against the perils which happen to manhood. Oh, Child of God, it may seem that all things are against you! Perhaps all God's waves and billows will go over you. You may learn first hand what hunger and nakedness and thirst mean. You may be found in this world houseless, friendless, fatherless, motherless—but remember that neither famine, nor hunger, nor poverty, nor sickness, nor weakness, nor contempt—can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord! You may sink ever so low, but you can never sink lower than the arm of God can reach! Your poor ship may be drifted before the gale, but it shall never go so fast but God can keep her off the rocks. Be of good cheer, the trials of this mortal life shall work out for you "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Again—you may be *tempted* by the world. Traps may be set for you on every hand. You may be tempted by your flesh. Your corruptions may have great power over you and often stagger your faith and make you tremble lest you should be utterly overthrown. And the devil may set upon you with fiery darts—he may pierce you with foul insinuations. He may almost make you blaspheme and with terrible suggestions he may drive you well-near to despair. But remember—

***"Hell and your sins obstruct your course,
But hell and sin are vanquished foes!"***

***Your Jesus nailed them to His cross
And sang the triumph when He rose.”***

And you, too, may be overcome by *sin*. You may fall—God grant you may not! But though you are kept eminently consistent and extremely virtuous, you will sin and sometimes that sin will get such a head against you that you can scarcely stem the torrent. Conscience will whisper, “How could you be a child of God and yet sin thus?” And Satan will howl in your ears, “He that sins knows not God.” And so you will be ready to be destroyed by your sin. But then, in the hour of your dark distress, read this verse—“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people, from henceforth even forever.” Be confident in this, that even sin, itself, shall not be able to cut the golden link which joins you to your Savior!

Have you ever heard the sermons of those people who believe in the apostasy of the saints? Have you not heard them very pathetically enlarge on the dangers of Christians? They say, “Yes, you may serve God all your life but perhaps in the last article of death your faith may faint, sin may prevail, and you may be destroyed.” And they illustrate their very beautiful and comfortable idea by the figure of a ship foundering just as she reaches the harbor. Now, many wooden ships, I doubt not, do founder and many ships built in free-will dockyards founder, too. But the chosen vessels of mercy are insured against perishing and were never known to be shipwrecked yet! As an old divine says, “There are no wrecks to be seen on the sea which rolls between Jerusalem on earth and Jerusalem above.” There are many tempests but never any shipwrecks. Bishop Hooker sweetly says, “Blessed forever and ever, be that mother’s child whose faith has made him the child of God. The earth may shake, the pillars thereof may tremble under us, the countenance of the heavens may be appalled, the sun may lose his light, the moon her beauty, the stars their glory—but concerning the man that trusted in God, the fire has proclaimed itself unable to singe a hair of his head! If lions, beasts ravenous by nature and keen by hunger, being set to devour, have, as it were, religiously adored the very flesh of a faithful man, what is there in the world that shall change his heart, overthrow his faith, alter his affections towards God, or the affection of God to him?” Oh, when we once believe this doctrine and receive it in our hearts as true, what a tendency it has to make the spirit buoyant in the deep waters and sing in the midst of the fierce billows! Who should fear if our salvation is made secure by the covenant of God?

And now, for a few moments, without detaining you too long, I will try to show some reasons why it is quite certain that the believer cannot by any possibility perish. I want to do this because I have a multitude of letters from this large congregation every week. And I have to say to the glo-

ry of God there are many of those letters that make me so glad I can scarcely contain myself—while others arouse all the anxiety of my heart! Among them is one something like this. “sir, I know that I was once a child of God. Many years ago I had such delightful feelings and such ecstasies that I cannot doubt but what if I had died then I should have gone to heaven. But now, sir, I am in such distress that I am quite sure if I were to die now I should be lost.” Now, my brother, I know you are here. You may take it to yourself. There are only two solutions to your mystery. If you were a child of God *then*, you are a child of God *now*. And if you would have gone to heaven *then* you will go to heaven *now*—be you what you may. If you ever were regenerated, regeneration is a work that is never done but once. And if it has been done once for you, it has not lost its efficacy—you are still a child of God. But I am inclined to think you never were a child of God—you had a few fine ecstasies. But you never knew the plague of your own heart! I am afraid, young man, you were never taken into God’s stripping room, never were tied up to the battle-axes and never had the ten-thronged whip of law on your back! But anyhow, do not tell me any more that you were converted once but not now, because if you were converted to God, God would have kept you. “The righteous *shall* hold on His way and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.”

And now shall I tell you why it is certain a believer cannot perish? In the first place, how can a believer perish if that Scripture is true which says that every believer is a member of Christ’s body? If you will only grant me my head afloat above the water I will give you leave to drown my fingers. Try it—you cannot do it. As long as a man’s head is above the flood you cannot drown him—it is clean impossible—nor yet drown any part of his body. Now, a Christian is a part of Christ, the Head. Christ, the Head of the body, is in heaven, and until you can drown the Head of the body, you cannot drown the body—and if the Head is in heaven, beyond the reach of harm—then every member of the body is alive and secure, and shall at last be in heaven, too! Do you imagine O heretic that Christ will lose a member of His body? Will Christ dwell in heaven with a mangled frame? God forbid! If Christ has taken us into union with Himself, though we are the meanest members of His heavenly body, He will not allow us to be cut away! Will a man lose an arm, or a leg, or a hand, while he can help himself? Of course not! And while Christ is omnipotent, nothing shall pluck His children from His body, for they are of “His flesh and His bones.”

But again—how can a believer perish and yet God be true? God has said, “When you pass through the rivers I will be with you and the floods shall not overflow you.” Now, if they should overflow us, how can God be true? “When you pass through the fires you shall not be burned, neither

shall the flame kindle upon you.” Then if we could ever find a believer consumed, we could prove God’s Promise broken. But we cannot do that. God is with His children and always will be. Besides has He not said, “I give unto My sheep *eternal life* and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands”? Tell me, Beloved, how can God be God and yet His people be plucked out of His hands? Surely He were not God to us if He were unfaithful to a promise so often repeated and so solemnly confirmed! Besides, mark you this—if one saint should fall away and perish, God would not only break His word but His oath, for He has sworn by Himself because He could swear by no greater—“that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” No, an oath-breaking God, a promise-despising Jehovah is an impossibility—and therefore a perished child of God is alike impossible!

And we need not fear, beloved, that we shall ever perish if we love the Savior, for the last reason is all potent. Will Christ lose that which He has bought with His own blood? Yes, there are men with judgments so perverted that they believe Christ died for those who are damned and bought with His own blood men that perish! Well, if they choose to believe that, I do not envy them the elasticity of their intellects. But this I conceive to be but an axiom that what Christ has paid for so dearly with His own heart’s blood He will have! If He loved us well enough to bear the excruciating agonies of the cross, I know He loves “well enough to keep us to the end.” “If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life.”

And now I close by addressing myself for a moment or two to ungodly persons present. Thinking persons they must be, or else what I say will not be likely to be noticed by them. When I was a boy I remember having a meditation something likethis—“Now, I should not like to be a thief or a murderer, or an unclean person.” I had such training that I had an abhorrence of sin of that sort. “And yet,” thought I to myself, “I may yet be hung; there is no reason why I should not turn out a thief,” because I remembered there were some of my schoolfellows, older than I was, who had already become very eminent in dishonesty. And I thought, “Why may not I?” No one can tell the rapture of my spirit when I thought I saw in my Bible the doctrine that if I gave my heart to Christ, He would keep me from sin and preserve me as long as I lived! I was not quite sure of it—not quite certain that was the truth of the Bible, though I thought so. But I remember when I heard the minister of some small hyper chapel utter the same truth! Oh, my heart was full of rapture! I panted after that gospel. “Oh!” I thought, “If God would but love me, if I might but know

myself to be His!” The enchanting part of it was that if I were so, He would keep me to the end. That made me so in love with the gospel, that boy as I was, knowing nothing savingly about the gospel, it made me love the thought of being saved, because, if saved, God would never turn me out of doors! That made the gospel very precious to me in my childhood—so that when the Holy Spirit showed me my guilt, and led me to seek a Savior—that doctrine was like a bright star to my spirit. I always looked forward to that. I thought, “Well, if I can once look to Christ and cast myself on Him, then He will grant me divine grace that I shall endure to the end.” And oh, that doctrine is so precious to me, now, that I think if anybody could possibly convince me that final perseverance is *not* a truth of the Bible, I would never preach again, for I feel I would have nothing worth preaching! If you could once make me believe that the regeneration of God might fail of its effect and that the love of God might be separated from His own chosen people, you might keep that Bible to yourself! Between its cover there is nothing that I could love, nothing that I could wish for, no gospel that would be suitable for me! I would count it to be a gospel beneath the dignity of God, and beneath the dignity of even fallen manhood, unless it is everlasting, “ordered in all things and sure.”

And now, poor trembling sinner, you who know your sins; believe on Christ this morning, and you are saved, and saved forever! Do but this moment look to Him who died upon the tree, and my brothers and sisters, give me your hand and let us weep for joy that you believe; and let our joy accumulate when we remember that the pillars of the heavens may totter, the solid foundations of the earth may reel, the countenance of the heavens may be astonished, the sun may be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood—but *nothing* shall pluck you from the strength of Israel’s hands! You are, you shall be infallibly secure! Come, O Holy Spirit, bless these words for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT NO. 162

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 8, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength: this is the first commandment.”
Mark 12:30.

OUR Savior said, “This is the first and great commandment.” It is “*the first*” commandment—the first for *antiquity*, for this is older than even the Ten Commandments of the written Law. Before God said, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal,” this Law was one of the commands of His universe, for this was binding upon the angels when man was not created. It was not necessary for God to say to the angels, “You shall do no murder, you shall not steal,” for such things to them were very probably impossible. But He did doubtless say to them, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.” And when first Gabriel sprang out of his native nothingness at the command of God, this command was binding on him. This is “the first commandment,” then, for antiquity. It was binding upon Adam in the Garden. Even before the creation of Eve, his wife, God had commanded this. Before there was a necessity for any other command, this was written upon the very tablets of his heart—“You shall love the Lord your God.”

It is “the first commandment,” again, not only for antiquity, but for *dignity*. This command, which deals with God the Almighty, must always take precedence of every other. Other commandments deal with man and man, but *this* with man and his Creator. Other commands of a ceremonial kind when disobeyed, may involve but slight consequences upon the person who may happen to offend. But this disobeyed provokes the wrath of God and brings His ire at once upon the sinner’s head! He who steals commits a gross offense inasmuch as he has also violated this command, but if it were possible for us to separate the two and to suppose an offense of one command without an offense of this, then we must put the violation of this commandment in the first rank of offenses. This is the king of commandments. This is the emperor of the Law—it takes precedence of all those princely commands that God afterwards gave to men.

Again, it is “the first commandment” for its *justice*. If men cannot see the justice of that Law which says, “Love your neighbor”—if there is some difficulty to understand how I can be bound to love the man who hurts and injures me—there can be no difficulty *here!* “You shall love your God” comes to us with so much Divine Authority and is so ratified by the dictates of Nature and our own conscience, that, verily, this command must take the first place for the justice of its demand. It is “the first” of commandments! Whichever Law you break, take care to keep this one! If you break the commandments of the ceremonial law, if you violate the ritual of your Church—your offense might be propitiated by the priest—but who can escape when *this* is your offense? This mandate stands fast. Man’s law you may break and bear the penalty. But if you break this, the penalty is too heavy for your soul to endure! It will sink you—it will sink you like a millstone lower than the lowest Hell! Take heed of this command above every other, to tremble at it and obey it, for it is “the first commandment.”

But the Savior said it was a “*great* commandment,” and so it is. It is “great,” for it contains in its heart every other. When God said, “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day.” When He said, “You shall not bow down unto the idols nor worship them”—when He said, “You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain”—He did but instance particulars which are all contained in this general mandate! This is the sum and substance of the Law! And indeed, even the Second Commandment lies within the folds of the first. “You shall love your neighbor,” is actually to be found within the center of this command, “You shall love the Lord your God,” for the loving of God would necessarily produce the loving of our neighbor.

It is a great command, then, for its *comprehensiveness* and it is a great command for the immense demand which it makes upon us. It demands all our mind, all our soul, all our heart and all our strength. Who is he who can keep it, when there is no power of manhood which is exempt from its sway? And to him who violates this Law it shall be proven that it is a great command in the greatness of its condemning power! It is like a great sword having two edges with which God shall slay him. It shall be like a great thunderbolt from God with which He shall cast down and utterly destroy the man that goes on in his willful breaking thereof! Hear then, O Gentiles and O house of Israel, hear then, this day, this first and great Commandment—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

I shall divide my discourse thus—first, *What says this Commandment unto us?* Secondly, *What say we unto it?*

I. And in discussing the first point, WHAT SAYS THIS COMMANDMENT UNTO US? we shall divide it thus. Here is first, the duty—“You shall love the Lord your God.” Here is, secondly, the measure of the duty—“You shall love Him with all your heart, mind, soul, strength.” Here is, thirdly, the ground of the claim, enforcing the duty—because He is “your God.” God demands us to obey simply upon the ground that He is our God!

1. To begin, then—this command *demands a duty*. That duty is that we should love God. How many men disobey this? One class of men break it willfully and grievously, for they *hate* God. There is the infidel who gnashes his teeth against the Almighty. The atheist who spits the venom of his blasphemy against the Person of his Maker. You will find those who rail at the very being of a God, though in their consciences they know there is a God, yet with their lips will blasphemously deny His existence! These men say there is no God because they *wish* there were none. The wish is father to the thought. And the thought demands great grossness of heart and grievous hardness of spirit before they dare to express it in words. And even when they express it in words, it needs much practice before they can do it with a bold, unblushing countenance. Now, this command bears hard on all them who hate, who despise, who blaspheme, who malign God or who deny His Being, or impugn His Character. O Sinner, God says you shall love Him with all your heart! And inasmuch as you hate Him, you stand this day condemned to the sentence of the Law of God!

Another class of men know there is a God but they *neglect* Him. They go through the world with indifference, “caring for none of these things.” “Well,” they say, “it makes no difference to me whether there is a God or not.” They have no particular care about Him. They do not pay one half as much respect to His commands as they would to the proclamation of the Queen. They are very willing to reverence all powers that be, but He who ordained them is to be passed by and to be forgotten. They would not be bold enough and honest enough to come straight out and despise God and join the ranks of His open enemies but they *forget* God! He is not in all their thoughts. They rise in the morning without a prayer. They rest at night without bending the knees. They go through the week’s business and they never acknowledge God. Sometimes they talk about good luck and chance—strange deities of their own brain—but God, the overruling God of Providence, they never talk of, though sometimes they may mention His name in flippancy and so increase their transgressions

against Him! O you despisers and neglecters of God! This command speaks to you—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

But I hear one of these gentlemen reply, "Well, Sir, I make no pretensions to religion, but still I believe I am quite as good as those who do! I am quite as upright, quite as moral and benevolent. True, I do not often darken the door of a church or chapel. I do not think it necessary, but I am a right good sort. There are many, many hypocrites in the Church and therefore I shall not think of being religious." Now, my dear Friend, allow me to say just one word—what business is that of yours? Religion is a personal matter between you and your Maker. Your Maker says—"You shall love Me with all your heart." It is of no use for you to point your finger across the street and point at a minister whose life is inconsistent, or at a deacon who is unholy, or to a member of the church who does not live up to his profession. You have nothing to do with that! When your Maker speaks to you, He appeals to you *personally*. And if you should tell Him, "My Lord, I will not love You because there are hypocrites," would not your own conscience convict you of the absurdity of your reasoning? Ought not your better judgment to whisper, "Inasmuch, then, as so many are hypocrites, take heed that you are not. And if there are so many pretenders who injure the Lord's cause by their lying pretensions, so much the more reason why you should have the real thing and help to make the church sound and honest"? But no. The merchants of our cities, the tradesmen of our streets, our artisans and our workmen—the great mass of them—live in total neglect of God! I do not believe that the heart of England is infidel. I do not believe that there is any vast extent of deism or atheism throughout England—the great fault of our time is the fault of *indifference*—people do not care whether the thing is right or not. What is it to them? They never take the trouble to search between the different professors of religion to see where the Truth lies. They do not think to pay their reverence to God with all their hearts. Oh, no, they forget what God demands and so rob Him of His due! To you, to you, great masses of the population, this Law speaks with iron tongue—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

There is a class of men who are a great deal nobler than the herd of simpletons who allow the sublimities of the Godhead to be concealed by their care for mere sensual good. There are some who do not forget that there is a God—no, they are astronomers and they turn their eyes to Heaven and they view the stars and they marvel at the majesty of the Creator. Or they dig into the bowels of the earth and they are astonished

at the magnificence of God's works of yore. Or they examine the animal and marvel at the wisdom of God in the construction of its anatomy. They, whenever they think of God, think of Him with the deepest awe, with the most profound reverence. You never hear them curse or swear—you will find that their souls are possessed of a deep awe of the Great Creator. But ah, my Friends, this is not enough—this is not obedience to the command! God does not say you shall *wonder* at Him, you shall have *awe* of Him! He asks more than that. He says, "You shall love Me!" Oh, you that see the orbs of Heaven floating in the far expanse, it is something to lift your eyes to Heaven and say—

***"These are Your glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty, Yours this universal frame.
Thus wondrous fair. Yourself how wondrous then!
Unspeakable, who sits above these Heavens
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these Your lowest works. Yet these declare
Your goodness beyond thought and power Divine."***

It is something to thus adore the Great Creator, but 'tis not all He asks. Oh, if you could add to this—"He who made these orbs, who leads them out by their hosts, is my Father and my heart beats with affection towards Him," then would you be obedient, but not till then! God asks not your admiration but your affection—"You shall *love* the Lord your God with all your heart."

There are others, too, who delight to spend time in contemplation. They believe in Jesus, in the Father, in the Spirit. They believe that there is but one God and that these Three are One. It is their delight to turn over the pages of Revelation, as well as the pages of history. They contemplate God. He is to them a matter of curious study. They like to meditate upon Him. The Doctrines of His Word they could hear all day long! And they are very sound in the faith, extremely orthodox and very knowledgeable. They can fight about Doctrines; they can dispute about the things of God with all their hearts. But alas, their religion is like a dead fish—cold and stiff—and when you take it into your hand, you say there is no life in it! Their souls were never stirred with it. Their hearts were never thorough into it. They can contemplate, but they cannot *love*! They can meditate, but they cannot *commune*. They can think of God, but they can never throw up their souls to Him and clasp Him in the arms of their affections! Ah, to you cold-blooded thinkers—to you, this text speaks! Oh, you that can contemplate but cannot love—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart."

Another man starts up and he says, "Well, this command does not bear on me! I attend my place of worship twice every Sunday. I have fam-

ily prayer. I am very careful not to get up in the morning without saying a form of prayer. I sometimes read my Bible. I subscribe to many charities.” Ah, my Friend, and you may do all that without loving God! Why, some of you go to your churches and chapels as if you were going to be horsewhipped! It is a dull and dreary thing to you. You dare not break the Sabbath, but you would if you could! You know very well that if it were not for a mere matter of fashion and custom, you would sooner by half be anywhere else than in God’s House! And as for prayer, why it is no delight to you! You do it because you think you ought to do it. Some indefinable sense of duty rests upon you. But you have no delight in it! And you talk of God with great propriety but you never talk of Him with love—your heart never bounds at the mention of His name! Your eyes never glisten at the thought of His attributes! Your soul never leaps when you meditate on His works! Your heart is all untouched and while you are honoring God with your lips your heart is far from Him and you are still disobedient to this commandment, “You shall love the Lord your God.”

And now, my Hearers, do you understand this commandment? Do I not see many of you seeking to look for loopholes through which to escape? Do I not think I see some of you striving to make a break in this Divine wall which girds us all? You say, “I never do anything against God.” No, my Friend, that is not it—it is not what you do *not* do—it is this, “Do you *love* Him?” “Well, Sir, but I never violate any of the proprieties of religion.” No, that is not it! The command is, “You shall *love* Him.” “Well, Sir, but I do a great deal for God. I teach in a Sunday school and so on.” Ah, I know, but do you *love* Him? It is the *heart* He wants and He will not be content without it! “You shall love the Lord your God.” That is the Law and though no man can keep it since Adam’s Fall, yet the Law is as much binding upon every son of Adam this day as when God first of all pronounced it! “You shall love the Lord your God.”

2. That brings us to the second point—*the measure of this Law*. How much am I to love God? Where shall I fix the point? I am to love my neighbor as I love myself. Am I to love my God more than that? Yes, certainly! The measure is even greater. We are not bound to love ourselves with all our mind and soul and strength and, therefore, we are not bound to love our neighbor so. The measure is a greater one. We are bound to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength!

And we deduce from that, first, that we are to love God *supremely*. You are to love your wife, O Husband. You can not love her too much except in one case—if you should love her before God and prefer her pleasure to the pleasure of the Most High—then would you be an idolater!

Child, you are to love your parents. You cannot love him too much who begat you, nor her too much who brought you forth. But remember, there is one Law that does override that! You are to love your God more than your father or your mother—He demands your first and your highest affection—you are to “love Him with all your heart.” We are allowed to love our relatives—we are taught to do so. He that does not love his own family is worse than a heathen and a publican. But we are not to love the dearest object of our hearts as much as we love God! You may erect little thrones for those whom you rightly love. But God’s Throne must be a glorious high Throne! You may set them upon the steps, but God must sit on the very seat itself. He is to be enthroned, the Royal One within your heart, the King of your affections. Say, say Hearer, have you kept this Commandment? I know I have not. I must plead guilty before God. I must cast myself before Him and acknowledge my transgression. But nevertheless, there stands the commandment—“You shall love God with all your heart”—that is, you shall love Him *supremely!*

Note, again—from the text we may deduce that a man is bound to love God *heartily*—that is plain enough, for it says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.” Yes, there is to be in our love to God a heartiness. We are to throw our whole selves into the love that we give to Him. Not the kind of love that some people give to their fellows, when they say, “Be you warmed and filled,” and nothing more. No—our heart is to have its whole being absorbed into God, so that God is the hearty object of its pursuit and its most mighty love! See how the word, “all,” is repeated again and again. The whole going forth of the being, the whole stirring up of the soul is to be for God and only for God! “With *all* your heart.”

Again—as we are to love God heartily, we are to love Him with *all our souls*. Then we are to love Him with all our life, for that is the meaning of it. If we are called to die for God, we are to prefer God before our own life! We shall never reach the fullness of this commandment till we get as far as the martyrs, who rather than disobey God would be cast into the furnace, or devoured by wild beasts! We must be ready to give up house, home, liberty, friends, comfort, joy and life at the command of God, or else we have not carried out this commandment, “You shall love Him with all your heart and with all your life.”

And, next we are to love God with all our *mind*. That is, the intellect is to love God. Now many men believe in the existence of a God, but they do not love that belief. They know there is a God, but they greatly wish there were none. Some of you today would be very pleased—you would set the bells a-ringing—if you believed there were no God. Why, if there were no

God, then you might live just as you liked! If there were no God, then you might run riot and have no fear of future consequences! It would be to you the greatest joy that could be—if you heard that the eternal God had ceased to be! But the Christian never wishes any such a thing as that. The thought that there is a God is the sunshine of his existence. His intellect bows before the Most High. Not like a slave who bends his body because he must—but like the angel who prostrates himself because he loves to adore his Maker! His intellect is as fond of God as his imagination. “Oh,” he says, “My God, I bless You that You Are, for You are my highest treasure, my richest and my rarest delight! I love You with all my intellect—I have neither thought, nor judgment, nor conviction, nor reason which I do not lay at Your feet and consecrate to Your honor.”

And once again, this love to God is to be characterized by *activity*, for we are to love Him with all our heart, heartily—with all our soul, that is, to the laying down of our life—with all our mind, that is mentally—and we are to love Him with all our *strength*, that is, *actively*. I am to throw my whole soul into the worship and adoration of God! I am not to keep back a single hour, or a single farthing of my wealth, or a single talent that I have, or a single atom of strength, bodily or mental, from the worship of God. I am to love Him with all my strength!

Now, what man ever kept this commandment? Surely none. And no man ever can keep it. Hence, then, the necessity of a Savior. Oh, that we might, by this commandment, be smitten to the earth—that our self-righteousness may be broken in pieces by this great hammer of “the first and great commandment!” But oh, my Brothers and Sisters, how may we wish that we *could* keep it! For, could we keep this command intact, unbroken, it would be a Heaven below—the happiest of creatures are those who are the most holy and that unreservedly love God!

3. And now, very briefly, I have just to state *God’s claim* upon which He bases this commandment. “You shall love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, strength.” Why? First, because He is the Lord—that is, Jehovah. And, secondly, because he is your God.

Man, the creature of a day, you ought to love Jehovah *for what He is*. Behold, Him whom you can not behold! Lift up your eyes to the seventh Heaven. See where in dreadful majesty the brightness of His garments makes the angels veil their faces, lest the light, too strong for even them, should smite them with eternal blindness! See Him who stretched the Heavens like a tent to dwell in and then did weave into their tapestry, with golden needle, stars that glitter in the darkness! Mark Him who spread the earth and created man upon it. And hear what He is—He is All-Sufficient, Eternal, Self-Existent, Unchangeable, Omnipotent, Omnis-

cient! Will you not reverence Him? He is good, He is loving, He is kind, He is gracious. See the bounties of His Providence—behold the plenitude of His Grace! Will you not love Jehovah because He is Jehovah?

But you are most of all bound to love Him *because He is your God*. He is your God *by Creation*. He made you. You did not make yourself. God, the Almighty, though He might use instruments, was nevertheless the sole Creator of man. Though He is pleased to bring us into the world by the agency of our progenitors, yet is He as much our Creator as He was the Creator of Adam when He formed him of clay and made him man. Look at this marvelous body of yours. See how God has put the bones together so as to be of the greatest service and use to you! See how He has arranged your nerves and blood vessels. Mark the marvelous machinery which He has employed to keep you in life! O thing of an hour! Will you not love Him who made you? Is it possible that you can think of Him who formed you in His hands and molded you by His will and yet will you not love Him who has fashioned you?

Again, consider, he is *your God*, for *He preserves you*. Your table is spread, but He spread it for you! The air that you breathe is a gift of His charity. The clothes that you have on your back are gifts of His love. Your life depends on Him. One wish of His Infinite Will would have brought you to the grave and given your body to the worms! And at this moment, though you are strong and hearty, your life is absolutely dependent upon Him. You may die where you are—you are out of Hell only as the result of His goodness. You would be at this hour sweltering in unquenchable flames had not His Sovereign Love preserved you! Traitor though you may be to Him—an enemy to His Cross and cause—yet He is your God, so far as this, for He made you and He keeps you alive! Surely, you may wonder that He should keep you alive when you refuse to love Him! Man, you would not keep a horse that did not work for you! Would you keep a servant in your house who insulted you? Would you spread bread upon his table and find livery for his back, if instead of doing your will and good pleasure, he would be his own master and would run counter to you? Certainly you would not! And yet here is God feeding you and you are rebelling against Him! Swearer, the lips with which you cursed your Maker are sustained by Him! The very lungs that you employ in blasphemy are inspired by Him with the breath of life, else you had ceased to be! Oh, strange that you should eat God's bread and then lift up your heel against Him! Oh, amazing that you should sit at the table of His Providence and be clothed in the livery of His bounty and yet that you should turn round and spit against high Heaven and lift the puny hand of your rebellion against the God who made you and preserves you! Oh, if

instead of our God we had one like unto ourselves to deal with, my Brothers and Sisters, we would not have patience with our fellow creatures for an hour! I marvel at God's long-suffering towards men—I see the foul-mouthed blasphemer curse his God—O God, how can You endure it? Why do You not smite him to the ground? If a gnat should torment me, should I not in one moment crush it? And what is man compared with his Maker? Not one half so great as an ant compared with man! Oh my Brothers and Sisters, we may well be astonished that God has mercy upon us, after all our violations of this high command. But I stand here today His servant and for myself and for you I claim for God, because He is God, because He is our God and our Creator—I claim the love of all hearts! I claim the obedience of all souls and of all minds and the consecration of all our strength!

O people of God, I need not speak to you. You know that God is your God in a special sense. Therefore you ought to love Him with a special love.

II. This is what the Commandment says to us. I shall be very short, indeed, upon the second head, which is, WHAT HAVE WE TO SAY TO IT?

What have you to say to this command, O Man? Have I one here so profoundly brainless as to reply, "I intend to keep it and I believe I can perfectly obey it and I think I can get to Heaven by obedience to it"? Man, you are either a fool, or else willfully ignorant, for surely, if you do understand this commandment, you will at once hang down your hands and say, "Obedience to that is quite impossible! Thorough and perfect obedience to that no man can hope to reach!" Some of you think you will go to Heaven by your good works, do you? This is the first stone that you are to step upon—I am sure it is too high for your reach! You might as well try to climb to Heaven by the mountains of earth and take the Himalayas to be your first step, for surely when you had stepped from the ground to the summit of Chimborazo you might even then despair of ever stepping to the height of this great commandment, for to obey this must always be an impossibility! But remember, you cannot be saved by your works if you cannot obey this entirely, perfectly, constantly, forever!

"Well," says one, "I dare say if I try and obey it as well as I can, that will do." No, Sir, it will not! God demands that you perfectly obey this and if you do not perfectly obey it, He will condemn you. "Oh," cries one, "who then, can be saved?" Ah, that is the point to which I wish to bring you. Who then can be saved by this Law? Why, no one in the world! Salvation by the works of the Law is proved to be a clean impossibility! None of you therefore will say you will try to obey it and so hope to be saved. I hear the best Christian in the world groan out his thoughts—"O God," he

says, "I am guilty. And should You cast me into Hell, I dare not say otherwise. I have broken this command from my youth up, even since my conversion. I have violated it every day! I know that if You should lay justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet, I must be swept away forever. Lord, I renounce my trust in the Law, for by it I know I can never see Your face and be accepted!" But listen, I hear the Christian say another thing—"Oh," he says to the commandment, "Commandment I cannot keep you, but my Savior kept you and what my Savior did, He did for all them who believe! And now, O Law, what Jesus did is mine! Have you any question to bring against me? You demand that I should keep this commandment wholly—lo, my Savior kept it wholly for me and He is my Substitute! What I cannot do myself, my Savior has done for me! You can not reject the work of the Substitute, for God accepted it in the day when He raised Him from the dead. O Law, shut your mouth forever! You can never condemn me! Though I break you a thousand times, I put my simple trust in Jesus and in Jesus only! His righteousness is mine and with it I pay the debt and satisfy your hungry mouth."

"Oh," cries one, "I wish I could say that I could thus escape the wrath of the Law! Oh that I knew that Christ did keep the Law for me!" Stop, then, and I will tell you! Do you feel today that you are guilty, lost and ruined? Do you with tears in your eyes confess that none but Jesus can do you good? Are you willing to give up all trusts and cast yourself alone on Him who died upon the Cross? Can you look to Calvary and see the bleeding Sufferer, all crimson with streams of gore? Can you say—

***"A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
Into Your arms I fall.
Jesus be You my righteousness,
My Savior and my All"?***

Can you say that? Then He kept the Law for *you* and the Law cannot condemn whom Christ has absolved! If Law comes to you and says, "I will damn you because you did not keep the Law," tell him that he dares not touch a hair of your head, for though you did not keep it, Christ kept it for you and Christ's righteousness is yours! Tell him there is the money and though you did not coin it, Christ did. And tell him when you have paid him all he asks for, he dares not touch you. You must be free, for Christ has satisfied the Law.

And after that—and here I conclude—O child of God I know what you will say. After you have seen the Law satisfied by Jesus, you will fall on your knees and say, "Lord, I thank You that this Law cannot condemn me, for I believe in Jesus. But now, Lord, help me from this time forth forever to keep it. Lord, give me a new heart, for this old heart never will love You! Lord, give me a new life, for this old life is too vile. Lord, give me

a new understanding—wash my mind with the clean water of the Spirit. Come and dwell in my judgment, my memory, my thought. And then give me the new strength of Your Spirit and I will, by Your Grace, love You with all my new heart, with all my new life, with all my renewed mind and with all my spiritual strength, from this time forth, even forever.”

May the Lord convict you of sin, by the energy of His Divine Spirit, and bless this simple sermon, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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AWAKE! AWAKE!

NO. 163

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 15, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”
1 Thessalonians 5:6.*

WHAT sad things sin has done. This fair world of ours was once a glorious temple, every pillar of which reflected the goodness of God and every part of which was a symbol of good, but sin has spoiled and marred all the metaphors and figures that might be drawn from earth. It has so deranged the divine economy of nature that those things which were matchless pictures of virtue, goodness and divine plenitude of blessing have now become the figures and representatives of sin. 'Tis strange to say but it is strangely true that the very best gifts of God have, by the sin of men, become the worst pictures of man's guilt! Behold the flood, breaking forth from its fountains—it rushes across the fields, bearing plenty on its bosom. It covers them awhile and then it subsides and leaves upon the plain a fertile deposit into which the farmer shall cast his seed and reap an abundant harvest. One would have called the breaking forth of water a fine picture of the plenitude of providence, the magnificence of God's goodness to the human race—but we find that sin has appropriated that figure to itself—the beginning of sin is like the breaking forth of waters! See the fire—how kindly God has bestowed upon us that element to cheer us in the midst of winter's frosts. Fresh from the snow and from the cold we rush to our household fire and there by our hearth we warm our hands and we are glad! Fire is a rich picture of the divine influences of the Spirit, a holy emblem of the zeal of the Christian. But alas, sin has touched this and the tongue is called “a fire.” “It is set on fire of hell,” we are told and it is evidently so when it utters blasphemy and slanders! Jude lifts up his hand and exclaims, when he looks upon the evils caused by sin, “Behold how great a matter a little fire kindles.” And then there is sleep, one of the sweetest of God's gifts, fair sleep—

“Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep.”

God has selected sleep as the very figure for the repose of the blessed. “They that sleep in Jesus,” says the Scripture. David puts it among the peculiar gifts of divine grace—“So He gives His beloved sleep.” But alas, sin could not let even this alone! Sin did override even this celestial metaphor and though God Himself had employed sleep to express the excellence of the state of the blessed, yet sin must have even this profaned, before itself can be expressed! Sleep is employed in our text as a picture

of a sinful condition—“Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

With that introduction I shall proceed at once to the text. The “sleep” of the text is *an evil to be avoided*. In the second place, the word, “therefore,” is employed to show us that there are *certain reasons for the avoiding of this sleep*. And since the apostle speaks of this sleep with sorrow, it is to teach us that there are some, whom he calls, “others,” *over whom it is our business to lament* because they sleep and do not watch and are not sober!

I. We commence, then, in the first place, by endeavoring to point out the EVIL WHICH THE APOSTLE INTENDS TO DESCRIBE UNDER THE TERM, SLEEP. The apostle speaks of “others” who are asleep. If you turn to the original you will find that the word translated, “others,” has a more emphatic meaning. It might be rendered (and Horne so renders it), “the refuse”—“Let us not sleep as do *the refuse*”—the common herd, the ignoble spirits—those who have no mind above the troubles of earth. “Let us not sleep as do the others”—the base ignoble multitude who are not alive to the high and celestial calling of a Christian! “Let us not sleep as do the refuse of mankind.” And you will find that the word, “sleep,” in the original, also has a more emphatic sense. It signifies a *deep* sleep, a profound slumber. And the apostle intimates that the refuse of mankind are now in a profound slumber. We will now try to explain what he meant by it.

First, the apostle meant that the refuse of mankind *are in a state of deplorable ignorance*. They who sleep know nothing. There may be merriment in the house, but the sluggard shares not in its gladness. There may be death in the family, but no tears wet the cheeks of the sleeper. Great events may have transpired in the world’s history but he knows not of them. An earthquake may have tumbled a city from its greatness, or war may have devastated a nation, or the banner of triumph may be waving in the gale and the clarions of his country may be saluting us with victory—but he knows nothing—

**“Their labor and their love are lost
Alike unknowing and unknown.”**

The sleeper knows not anything. Behold how the refuse of mankind are alike in this! Of some things they know much, but of spiritual things they know nothing! Of the divine person of the adorable Redeemer they have no idea. Of the sweet enjoyments of a life of piety they cannot even make a guess. Towards the high enthusiasms and the inward raptures of the Christian they cannot mount! Talk to them of divine doctrines and they are to them a riddle! Tell them of sublime experiences and they seem to them to be enthusiastic fancies. They know nothing of the joys that are to come! And alas, they are oblivious of the evils which shall happen to them if they go on in their iniquity! The masses of mankind are ignorant. They know not—they have not—the knowledge of God. They have no fear of Jehovah before their eyes. Blindfolded by the ignorance of this world, they march on through the paths of lust to that sure and

dreadful end—the everlasting ruin of their souls. Brothers and sisters, if we are saints, let us not be ignorant as are others. Let us search the Scriptures, for in them we have eternal life, for they do testify of Jesus. Let us be diligent. Let not the word depart out of our hearts. Let us meditate therein both day and night that we may be as the tree planted by the rivers of water. “Let us not sleep as do others.”

Again, sleep pictures *a state of insensibility*. There may be much knowledge in the sleeper. But it is hidden, stored away in his mind. It might be well developed if he but could be awakened, but he has no sensibility—he knows nothing. The burglar has broken into the house—the gold and silver are both in the robber’s hands. The child is being murdered by the cruelty of him that has broken in, but the father slumbers! Though all the gold and silver that he has and his most precious child are in the hands of the destroyer, he is unconscious—how can he feel when sleep has utterly sealed his senses? Lo, in the street there is mourning. A fire has just now burned down the habitation of the poor, and houseless beggars are in the street. They are crying at his window and asking him for help. But he sleeps and what does he care though the night is cold and though the poor are shivering in the blast? He has no consciousness. He feels not for them. There, take the title deed of his estate and burn the document! There, set light to his farmyard! Burn up all that he has in the field—kill his horses and destroy his cattle—let now the fire of God descend and burn up his sheep! Let the enemy fall upon all that he has and devour it—he sleeps as soundly as if he were guarded by the angel of the Lord!

Such are the refuse of mankind. But alas, that we should have to include in that word, “refuse,” the great bulk thereof! How few there are that feel *spiritually*! They feel acutely enough any injury to their body, or to their estate, but alas, for their *spiritual* concerns they have no sensation whatever! They are standing on the brink of hell, but they tremble not! The anger of God is burning against them but they fear not. The sword of Jehovah is unsheathed, but terror does not seize upon them! They proceed with the merry dance; they drink the bowl of intoxicating pleasure. They revel and they riot—still do they sing the lascivious song—yes, they do more than this! In their vain dreams they do defy the Most High, whereas if they were once awakened to the consciousness of their state, the marrow of their bones would melt and their heart would dissolve like wax! They are asleep, indifferent and unconscious. Do what you may to them. Let everything be swept away that is hopeful—that might give them cheer when they come to die—they feel it not! For how can a sleeper feel anything? “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

Again—the sleeper *cannot defend himself*. Behold yonder prince. He is a strong man, yes, and an armed strong man. He has entered into the tent. He is wearied. He has drunk the woman’s milk. He has eaten her “butter in a lordly dish.” He casts himself down upon the floor and he

slumbers. And now she draws near. She has with her, her hammer and her nail. Warrior! You could break her into atoms with one blow of your mighty arm, but you cannot now defend yourself! The nail is at his ear, the woman's hand is on the hammer and the nail has pierced his skull, for when he slept he was defenseless! The banner of Sisera had waved victoriously over mighty foes, but now it is stained by a woman! Tell it, tell it, tell it! The man—who when he was awake made nations tremble—dies by the hand of a feeble woman when he sleeps!

Such are the refuse of mankind. They are asleep. They have no power to resist temptation. Their moral strength is departed, for God is departed from them. There is the temptation to lust. They are men of sound principle in business matters and nothing could make them swerve from honesty—but lasciviousness *destroys* them! They are taken like a bird in a snare, they are caught in a trap, they are utterly subdued. Or maybe it is another way that they are conquered. They are men who would not do an unchaste act, or even think a lascivious thought—they scorn it! But they have another weak point—they are entrapped by the glass. They are taken and they are destroyed by drunkenness. Or, if they can resist these things and are inclined neither to looseness of fire nor to excess in living, yet maybe covetousness enters into them by the name of prudence. It slides into their hearts and they are led to grasp after treasure and to heap up gold. Even though that gold is wrung out of the veins of the poor and though they do suck the blood of the orphan, they seem to be unable to resist their passion. How many times have I been told by men, “I cannot help it, sir! Do what I may, I resolve, I re-resolve but I do the same! I am defenseless. I cannot resist the temptation!” Oh, of course you cannot while you are asleep! O Spirit of the living God, wake up the sleeper! Let sinful sloth and presumption both be startled, lest haply Moses should come their way and finding them asleep, should hang them on the gallows of infamy forever!

Now, I come to give another meaning of the word, “sleep.” I hope there have been some of my congregation who have been tolerably easy while I have described the first three things because they have thought that they were exempt in those matters. But sleep also signifies *inactivity*. The farmer cannot plow his field in his sleep, neither can he cast the grain into the furrows, nor watch the clouds, nor reap his harvest! The sailor cannot reef his sail, or direct his ship across the ocean while he slumbers. It is not possible that on the Exchange, or in the market, or in the house of business, men should transact their affairs with their eyes fast closed in slumber! It would be a singular thing to see a nation of sleepers, for that would be a nation of idle men—they would all starve! They would produce no wealth from the soil; they would have nothing for their backs; nothing for clothing and nothing for food. But how many we have in the world who are inactive through sleep! Yes, I say *inactive*. I mean by that, that they are active enough in one direction, but they are inactive in the right. Oh, how many men there are who are totally inactive in any-

thing that is for God's glory, or for the welfare of their fellow creatures? For themselves, they can "rise up early and sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness." For their children, which is an alias for themselves, they can toil until their fingers ache—they can weary themselves until their eyes are red in their sockets—till the brain whirls and they can do no more! But for God they can do nothing. Some say they have no time, others frankly confess that they have no will—for God's church they would not spend an hour—while for this world's pleasure they could lay out a month! For the poor they cannot spend their time and their attention. They may haply have time to spare for themselves and for their own amusement, but for holy works, for deeds of charity and for pious acts they declare they have no leisure! The truth is, they have no will!

Behold how many professing Christians there are who are asleep in this sense! They are inactive. sinners are dying in the street by hundreds. Men are sinking into the flames of eternal wrath, but they fold their arms! They pity the poor perishing sinner, but they do nothing to show that their pity is real. They go to their places of worship; they occupy their well-cushioned easy pew. They wish the minister to feed them every Sunday, but there is never a child taught in the Sunday school by them. There is never a tract distributed at the poor man's house. There is never a deed done which might be the means of saving souls. We call them good men, some of them we even elect to the office of deacons and no doubt good men they are. They are as good as Anthony meant to say that Brutus was honorable when he said, "So are we all, all honorable men." So are we all, all good, if they are good! But these are good and in some sense—good for nothing! They just sit and eat the bread but they do not plow the field! They drink the wine but they will not raise the vine that produces it. They think that they are to live unto themselves, forgetting that "No man lives unto himself and no man dies unto himself." Oh, what a vast amount of sleeping we have in all our churches and chapels! Truly if our churches were once awake—as far as material things are concerned—there are enough converted men and women and there is enough talent with them and enough money with them and enough time with them, God granting the abundance of His Holy Spirit, which He would be sure to do if they were all zealous—there is enough to preach the gospel in every corner of the earth! The church does not need to stop for want of instruments or for want of agencies—we have everything now except the will! We have all that we may expect God to give for the conversion of the world, except a heart for the work and the Spirit of God poured out into our midst! Oh, brothers and sisters "Let us not sleep as do others." You will find the "others" in the church and in the world—"the refuse" of both are sound asleep!

Before, however, I can dismiss this first point of explanation, it is necessary for me to say that the apostle himself furnishes us with part of an exposition. The second sentence, "let us watch and be sober," implies that the reverse of these things is the sleep which he means. "Let us

watch.” There are many who never watch. They never watch against sin. They never watch against the temptations of the enemy. They do not watch against themselves, or against “the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life.” They do not watch for opportunities to do good; they do not watch for opportunities to instruct the ignorant, to confirm the weak, to comfort the afflicted, to succor them who are in need. They do not watch for opportunities of glorifying Jesus, or for times of communion. They do not watch for the promises. They do not watch for answers to their prayers. They do not watch for the second coming of our Lord Jesus. These are the refuse of the world—they watch not because they are asleep. But let us watch—so shall we prove that we are not slumberers!

Again—let us “*be sober.*” Albert Barnes says this most of all refers to abstinence, or temperance in eating and drinking. Calvin says not so—this refers more especially to the spirit of moderation in the things of the world. Both are right; it refers to both. There are many who are not sober. They sleep because they are not so, for insobriety leads to sleep. They are not sober—they are drunks, they are gluttons. They are not sober—they cannot be content to do a little business—they want to do a great deal. They are not sober—they cannot carry on a trade that is sure—they must speculate. They are not sober—if they lose their property, their spirit is cast down within them and they are like men who are drunk with wormwood. If on the other hand, they get rich, they are not sober—they so set their affections upon things on earth that they become intoxicated with pride because of their riches! They become purse-proud and need to have the heavens lifted up higher lest their heads should dash against the stars! How many people there are who are not sober! Oh, I might especially urge this precept upon you at this time, my dear friends. We have hard times coming and the times are hard enough now. Let us be sober! The fearful panic in America has mainly arisen from disobedience to this command—“Be sober,” and if the professors of America had obeyed this commandment, and had been sober, the panic might at any rate have been mitigated, if not totally avoided! Now, in a little time you who have any money laid by will be rushing to the bank to have it drawn out because you fear that the bank is tottering. You will not be sober enough to have a little trust in your fellow men, and help them through their difficulty, and so be a blessing to the commonwealth; and you who think there is anything to be had by lending your money at usury, will not be content with lending what you have, but you will be extorting and squeezing your poor debtors that you may get the more to lend! Men are seldom content to get rich slowly, but he who hastens to be rich shall not be innocent!

Take care, my brothers and sisters—if any hard times should come to London, if commercial houses should smash and banks be broken—take care to be sober! There is nothing will get us over a panic so well as everyone of us trying to keep our spirits up—just rising in the morning and

saying, "Times are very hard, and today I may lose my all, but fretting will not help it, so just let me set a bold heart against hard sorrow, and go to my business; the wheels of trade may stop. I bless God my treasure is in heaven. I cannot be bankrupt—I have set my affections on the things of God. I cannot lose those things. There is my jewel. There is my heart!" Why, if all men could do that, it would tend to create public confidence. But the cause of the great ruin of many men is the covetousness of all men and the fear of some. If we could all go through the world with confidence and with boldness and with courage, there is nothing in the world that could avert the shock as well! I suppose the shock must come. And there are many men now present who are very respectable, who may expect to be beggars before long. Your business is so to put your trust in Jehovah, that you may be able to say, "Though the earth is removed and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore will I not fear." And doing that you will be creating more probabilities for the avoidance of your own destruction than by any other means which the wisdom of man can dictate to you! Let us not be intemperate in business, as are others; but let us be awake! "Let us not sleep"—not be carried away by the sleepwalking of the world, for what is it better than that—activity and greed in sleep? "But let us watch and be sober." Oh, Holy Spirit help us to watch and be sober!

II. Thus I have occupied a great deal of time in explaining the first point—What was the sleep which the apostle meant? And now you will notice that the word, "therefore," implies that there are CERTAIN REASONS FOR THIS. I shall give you these reasons. And if I should cast them somewhat into a dramatic form, you must not wonder—they will the better, perhaps, be *remembered*. "Therefore," says the apostle, "let us not sleep."

We shall first look at the chapter itself for our reasons. The first reason precedes the text. The apostle tells us that "We are all the children of *the light* and of the day; *therefore* let us not sleep as do others." I marvel not when, as I walk through the streets after nightfall, I see every shop closed and every blind drawn. And I see the light in the upper room significant of retirement to rest. I wonder not that a half an hour later my footsteps startle me and I find none in the streets. Should I ascend the staircase and look into the sleepers' placid countenances, I should not wonder, for it is night, the proper time for sleep. But if some morning at eleven or twelve o'clock, I should walk down the streets and find myself alone and notice every shop closed and every house shut up and hear no noise, I should say, "'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing! Where are the people? 'Tis daytime and yet they are all asleep." I would be inclined to seize the first rapper I could find and give a double knock and rush to the next door and ring the bell and do so all the way down the street! Or go to the police station and wake up what men I found there and bid them make a noise in the street! Or go for the fire engine

and bid the firemen rattle down the road and try to wake the people up, for I would say to myself, "There is some pestilence here! The angel of death must have flown through these streets during the night and killed all these people, or else they would have been sure to have been awake." Sleep in the daytime is utterly incongruous! "Well, now," says the apostle Paul, "you people of God, it is daytime with you. The sun of righteousness has risen upon you with healing in His wings. The light of God's Spirit is in your conscience. You have been brought out of darkness into marvelous light! For you to be asleep, for a church to slumber is like a city in bed in the daytime; like a whole town slumbering when the sun is shining—it is untimely and unseemly."

And now, if you look at the text again, you will find there is another argument. "Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love." So, then, it seems it is wartime and, therefore, again it is unseemly to slumber! There is a fortress yonder, far away in India. A troop of those abominable Sepoys have surrounded it. Bloodthirsty hellhounds, if they once gain admission, they will tear the mother and her children and cut the strong man in pieces! They are at the gates—their cannons are loaded—their bayonets thirst for blood and their swords are hungry to slay. Go through the fortress and the people are all asleep. There is the warden on the tower, nodding on his bayonet. There is the captain in his tent, with his pen in his hand and his dispatches before him, asleep at the table! There are soldiers lying down in their tents ready for the war but all slumbering. There is not a man to be seen keeping watch. There is not a sentry there! All are asleep! Why, my friends, you would say, "Whatever is the matter here? What can it be? Has some great wizard been waving his wand and put a spell upon them all? Or are they all mad? Have their minds fled? Surely, to be asleep in wartime is indeed outrageous! Here, take down that trumpet—go close up to the captain's ear and blow a blast and see if it does not awake him in a moment! Take away that bayonet from the soldier who is asleep on the walls and give him a sharp prick with it and see if he does not awake!" But surely, surely nobody can have patience with people asleep when the enemy surround the walls and are thundering at the gates!

Now, Christians, this is your case. Your *life* is a life of warfare—the world, the flesh and the devil are a hellish trinity and your poor nature is wretched mud work behind which to be entrenched! Are you asleep? Asleep? When Satan has fireballs of lust to hurl into the windows of your eyes? When he has arrows of temptation to shoot into your heart? When he has snares into which to trap your feet? Asleep? When he has undermined your very existence and when he is about to apply the match with which to destroy you unless sovereign grace prevents it? Oh, sleep not, soldier of the cross! To sleep in wartime is utterly inconsistent! Great Spirit of God forbid that we should slumber!

But now, leaving the chapter, itself, I will give you one or two other reasons that will, I trust, move Christian people to awake out of their

sleep. *“Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!”* Then comes the ringing of a bell; what is this? Here is a door marked with a great white cross! Lord, have mercy upon us! All the houses down that street seem to be marked with that white death cross. What is this? Here is the grass growing in the streets. Here are Cornhill and Cheapside deserted! No one is found treading a solitary pavement. There is not a sound to be heard but those horse hoofs, like the hoofs of death’s pale horse upon the stones, the ringing of that bell that sounds the death knell to many and the rumbling of the wheels of that cart and the dreadful cry, *“Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!”* Do you see that house? A physician lives there. He is a man who has great skill and God has lent him wisdom. A little while ago, while in his study, God was pleased to guide his mind, and he discovered the secret of the plague. He was plague-smitten himself, and ready to die, but he lifted the blessed vial to his lips and he drank a draught and cured himself. Do you believe what I am about to tell you? Can you imagine it? That man has the prescription that will heal all these people! He has it in his pocket! He has the medicine which if once distributed in those streets, would make the sick rejoice, and put that dead man’s bell away! But he is asleep! He is asleep! He is asleep! O you heavens! Why do you not fall and crush the wretch? O earth! How could you bear this demon upon your bosom? Why not swallow him up? He has the medicine! He is too lazy to go and proclaim the remedy! He has the cure, and is too idle to go out and administer it to the sick and the dying! No, my friends, such an inhuman wretch could not exist! But I can see him here today. There you are! You know the world is sick with the plague of sin, and you yourself have been cured by the remedy which has been provided. You are asleep, inactive, loitering. You do not go forth to—

***“Tell to others round,
What a dear Savior you have found.”***

There is the precious gospel—you do not go and put it to the lips of a sinner! There is the all-precious blood of Christ—you never go to tell the dying what they must do to be saved! The world is perishing with worse than plague—and you are idle! And you are a minister of the gospel. And you have taken that holy office upon yourself. And you are content to preach twice on a Sunday and once on a weekday and there is no remonstrance within you. You never desire to attract the multitudes to hear you preach. You had rather keep your empty benches and study propriety, than you would once, at the risk of appearing over-zealous, draw the multitude and preach the word to them! You are a writer—you have great power in writing. You devote your talents alone to light literature, or to the production of other things which may furnish amusement but which cannot benefit the soul. You know the Truth of God but you do not tell it out. Yonder mother is a converted woman—you have children and you forget to instruct them in the way to heaven. You yonder are a young man, having nothing to do on the Sabbath and there is the

Sunday school. You do not go to tell those children the sovereign remedy that God has provided for the care of sick souls. The death-bell is ringing even now! Hell is crying out, howling with hunger for the souls of men. "Bring out the sinner! Bring out the sinner! Bring out the sinner! Let him die and be damned!" And there are you professing to be a Christian, and doing nothing which might make you the instrument of saving souls—never putting out your hands to be the means in the hand of the Lord of plucking sinners as brands from the burning! Oh, may the blessing of God rest on you, to turn you from such an evil way that you may not sleep as do others; but may watch and be sober! The world's imminent danger demands that we should be active and not be slumbering!

Hark how the mast creaks! See the sails there, torn to ribbons. Breakers ahead! She will be on the rocks directly. Where is the captain? Where is the boatswain? Where are the sailors? Ahoy there! Where are you? Here's a storm come on! Where are you? You are down in the cabin? And there is the captain in a soft sweet slumber! There is the man at the wheel, as sound asleep as ever he can be. And there are all the sailors in their hammocks. What? And the breakers ahead? What? The lives of two hundred passengers in danger, and here are these brutes asleep? Kick them out! What is the good of letting such men as these be sailors, especially in such a time as this? Why, out with you! If you had gone to sleep in fine weather we might have forgiven you. Up with you, Captain! What have you been doing? Are you mad? But hark! The ship has struck—she will be down in a moment! Now you will work, will you? Now you will work when it is of no use and when the shrieks of drowning women shall toll you into hell for your most accursed negligence in not having taken care of them! Well, that is very much like a great many of us, in these times, too!

This proud ship of our commonwealth is reeling in a storm of sin. The very mast of this great nation is creaking under the hurricane of vice that sweeps across the noble vessel. Every timber is strained and God help the good ship, or alas, none can save her! And who are her captain and her sailors, but ministers of God, the professors of religion? These are they to whom God gives divine grace to steer the ship. "You are the salt of the earth." You preserve and keep it alive, O children of God. Are you asleep in the storm? Are you now slumbering? If there were no dens of vice; if there were no harlots; if there were no houses of profanity; if there were no murders and no crimes, oh, you who are the salt of the earth—you might sleep. But today the sin of London cries in the ears of God. This behemoth city is covered with crime, and God is vexed with her. And are we asleep, doing nothing? Then God forgive us! But surely, of all the sins He ever does forgive, this is the greatest, the sin of slumbering when a world is damning—the sin of being idle when Satan is busy, devouring the souls of men. "Brethren let us not sleep" in such times as these, for if we do, a curse must fall upon us, horrible to bear!

There is a poor prisoner in a cell. His hair is all matted over his eyes. A few weeks ago the judge put on the black cap and commanded that he should be taken to the place from where he came and hung by the neck until dead. The poor wretch has his heart broken within him while he thinks of the shackle, of the gallows and of the drop, and of after-death. Oh, who can tell how his heart is rent and racked while he thinks of leaving all and going he knows not where? There is a man there, sound asleep upon a bed. He has been asleep there these two days and under his pillow he has that prisoner's free pardon! I would horsewhip that scoundrel; horsewhip him soundly, for making that poor man have two days of extra misery. Why, if I had had that man's pardon, I would have been there! If I rode on the wings of lightning to get to him, I would have thought the fastest train that ever run but slow, if I had so sweet a message to carry and such a poor heavy heart to carry it to! But that man, that brute, is sound asleep with a free pardon under his pillow, while that poor wretch's heart is breaking with dismay! Ah, do not be too hard with him—he is here today! Side by side with you this morning there is sitting a poor penitent sinner. God has pardoned him and intends that you should tell him that good news. He sat by your side last Sunday and he wept the entire sermon through, for he felt his guilt. If you had spoken to him, then, who can tell? He might have had comfort but there he is now—you did not tell him the good news. Do you leave that to me to do? Ah, sirs, but you cannot serve God by proxy! What the minister does is nothing to you. You have your own personal duty to do and God has given you a precious promise. It is now on your heart. Will you not turn round to your neighbor and tell him that promise? Oh, there is many an aching heart that aches because of our idleness in telling the good news of this salvation! "Yes," says one of my members, who always comes to this place on Sunday, and looks out for young men and young women whom he has seen in tears the Sunday before, and who brings many into the church, "yes, I could tell you a story." He looks a young man in the face, and says, "Haven't I seen you here a great many times?" "Yes." "I think you take a deep interest in the service, do you not?" "Yes, I do—what makes you ask me that question?" "Because I looked at your face last Sunday, and I thought there was something at work with you." "Oh, sir," he says, "nobody has spoken to me ever since I have been here till now, and I need to say a word to you. When I was at home with my mother, I used to think I had some idea of religion, but I came away, and was bound apprentice with an ungodly lot of youths, and have done everything I ought not to have done. And now, sir, I begin to weep, I begin to repent. I wish to God that I knew how I might be saved! I hear the word preached, sir, but I need something spoken *personally* to me by somebody." And he turns around; he takes him by the hand, and says, "My dear young brother, I am so glad I spoke to you. It makes my poor old heart rejoice to think that the Lord is still doing something here. Now, do not be cast down, for you know, 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of

all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” The young man puts his handkerchief to his eyes, and after a minute he says, “I wish you would let me call and see you, sir.” “Oh, you may,” he says. He talks with him. He leads him onward, and at last, by God’s grace, the happy youth comes forward and declares what God has done for his soul, and owes his salvation as much to the humble instrumentality of the man that helped him as he could do to the preaching of the minister!

Beloved brothers and sisters, the bridegroom comes! Awake! Awake! The earth must soon be dissolved, and the heavens must melt! Awake! Awake! O Holy Spirit awaken us all, and keep us awake!

III. And now I have no time for the last point, and therefore, I shall not detain you; suffice me to say in warning; there is AN EVIL HERE LAMENTED. There are some who are asleep, and the apostle mourns it.

My fellow sinner, you that are this day unconverted, let me say six or seven sentences to you and you shall depart. Unconverted man! Unconverted woman! You are asleep today, as they who sleep on the top of the mast in time of a storm. You are asleep as he who sleeps when the floods are out, and when his house is undermined and being carried down the stream far out to sea! You are asleep as he who in the upper chamber when his house is burning, and his own locks are singeing in the fire—he knows not the devastation around him! You are asleep—asleep as he who lies upon the edge of a precipice with death and destruction beneath him! One single start in his sleep would send him over, but he knows it not. You are asleep this day, and the place where you sleep has so frail a support that when once it breaks, you shall fall into hell—and if you wake not till then—what an awakening it will be! “In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.” And he cried for a drop of water, but it was denied him. “He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned.” This is the gospel! Believe in Jesus, and you shall “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

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THE LOVED ONES CHASTENED

NO. 164

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 22, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”
Revelation 3:19.*

THE dealings of God towards the sons of men have always puzzled the wise men of the earth who have tried to understand them. Apart from the revelation of God, the dealings of Jehovah towards His creatures in this world seem to be utterly inexplicable. Who can understand how it is that the wicked flourish and are in great power? The ungodly man flourishes like a green bay tree. Behold, he stretches out his roots by the river. He knows not the year of drought—his leaf withers not. And his fruit does not fall in an untimely season. Lo, these are the ungodly that flourish in the world! They are filled with riches. They heap up gold like dust; they leave the rest of their substance to their babies. They add field to field and acre to acre and they become the princes of the earth! On the other hand, see how the righteous are cast down. How often is virtue dressed in the rags of poverty! How frequently is the most pious spirit made to suffer from hunger and thirst and nakedness! We have sometimes heard the Christian say, when he has contemplated these things, “Surely I have served God in vain! It is for nothing that I have chastened myself every morning and vexed my soul with fasting, for lo, God has cast me down and He lifts up the sinner. How can this be?” The sages of the heathen could not answer this question and they, therefore, adopted the expedient of cutting the Gordian knot. “We cannot tell how it is,” they might have said—therefore they flew at the fact itself and denied it! “The man that prospers is favored of the gods. The man who is unsuccessful is obnoxious to the Most High.” So said the heathen and they knew no better. Those more enlightened from the east, who talked with Job in the days of his affliction got but little further. They believed that all who served God would have a hedge about them. God would multiply their wealth and increase their happiness. They saw in Job’s affliction a certain sign that he was a hypocrite and, therefore, God had quenched his candle and put out his light in darkness. And alas, even Christians have fallen into the same error! They have been apt to think that if God lifts a man up, there must be some excellence in him. And if He chastens and afflicts, they are generally led to think that it must be an exhibition of God’s wrath. Now hear the text and the riddle is all solved—listen to the words of Jesus,

speaking to His servant John and the mystery is all unraveled. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten—be zealous therefore, and repent.”

The fact is that this world is not the place of punishment! There may now and then be eminent judgments, but as a rule God does not in the present state fully punish any man for sin. He allows the wicked to go on in their wickedness. He throws the reins upon their necks. He lets them go on unbridled in their lusts. There may be some checks of conscience, but these are rather as warnings than as punishments. And, on the other hand, He casts the Christian down. He gives the most afflictions to the most pious. Perhaps He makes more waves of trouble roll over the breast of the most sanctified Christian than over the heart of any other man living! So, then, we must remember that as this world is not the place of punishment, we are to expect punishment and reward in the world to come! And we must believe that the only reason, then, why God afflicts His people must be this—

***“In love I correct you, your gold to refine
To make you at length in My likeness to shine.”***

I shall try this morning to notice, first, *what it is in His children that God corrects*; secondly, *why God corrects them*; and thirdly, *what is our comfort when we are laboring under the rebukes and correcting of our God*. Our comfort must be the fact that He loves us even then—“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”

I. First, then, beloved, WHAT IS IT IN THE CHRISTIAN THAT GOD REBUKES? One of the Articles of the Church of England says right truly, that naturally, “man is very far gone from original righteousness and is of his own nature inclined to evil so that the flesh lusts always contrary to the spirit. And therefore in every person born into this world, it deserves God’s wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature does remain, yes, in them who are regenerated. Whereby the lust of the flesh, called by the Greek, *ponema sarkos*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them who believe and are baptized, yet the apostle does confess that sensuality and lust has of itself the nature of sin.” And because evil remains in the regenerate, there is therefore a necessity that that evil should be upbraided. Yes and a necessity that when that upbraiding is not sufficient, God should go to severer measures and after having failed in His rebukes, adopt the expedient of chastening! “I rebuke and chasten.” Hence God has provided means for the chastisement and the rebuking of His people. Sometimes God rebukes His children under the ministry. The minister of the gospel is not always to be a minister of consolation. The same Spirit that is the Comforter is He who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. And the same minister who is to be as the Angel of God unto our souls, uttering sweet words that are full of honey, is to be at times the rod of God, the staff in the hand of the Almighty with which

to smite us on account of our transgressions! And ah, beloved, how often under the ministry ought we to have been checked when we were not? Perhaps the minister's words were very forcible and they were uttered with true earnestness and they applied to our case, but alas, we shut our ears to them and applied them to our brother instead of to ourselves! I have often marveled when I have been preaching. I have thought that I have described the cases of some of my most prominent members. I have marked in them many sins and as Christ's faithful pastor, I have not shunned to picture their case in the pulpit that they might receive a well-deserved rebuke. But I have marveled when I have spoken to them afterwards, that they have thanked me for what I have said because they thought it so applicable to such another brother in the church—while I had intended it wholly for them and had, as I thought, so made the description accurate and so brought it out in all its little points that it must have been received by them! But alas, you know my friends, that we sit under the sound of the word and we seldom think how much it belongs to us, especially if we hold an office in the church. It is hard for a minister when he is hearing a brother minister preach, to think it may be he has a word of rebuke to him! If exalted to the office of elder or deacon, there grows sometimes with that office a callousness to the word when spoken to himself and the man in office is apt to think of the hundreds of inquirers unto whom that may be found applicable and of the multitudes of the babes in grace to whom such a word comes in season. Yes, friends, if we did but listen more to the rebukes of God in the ministry; if we hearkened more to His word as He speaks to us every Sabbath, we might be spared many corrections! But usually we are not corrected until we have despised rebukes and after we have rejected them—then out comes the rod.

Sometimes, again, God rebukes his children *in their consciences*, without any visible means whatever. You who are the people of God will acknowledge that there are certain times when, apparently without any instrumentality, your sins are brought to remembrance. Your soul is cast down within you and your spirit is sorely vexed. God the Holy Spirit is Himself making inquisition for sin. He is searching Jerusalem with candles. He is so punishing you because you are settled on your lees. If you look around you, there is nothing that could cause your spirits to sink. The family is not sick. Your business prospers, your body is in good health. Why, then, this sinking of spirit? You are not conscious at the time, perhaps, that you have committed any gross act of sin—still this dark depression continues and at last you discover that you had been living in a sin which you did not know—some sin of ignorance, hidden and unperceived and therefore God did withdraw from you the *joy of His salvation* till you have searched your heart and discovered wherein the

evil lay. We have much reason to bless God that He does adopt this way, sometimes, of rebuking us before He chastens.

At other seasons the rebuke is *quite indirect*. How often have I met rebuke where it never was intended to be given? But God overruled the circumstance for good. Have you ever been rebuked by a child? The innocent little prattler uttered something quite unwittingly which cut you to your heart and manifested your sin! Maybe you walked the street and you heard some man swear. And the thought perhaps struck your mind, "How little am I doing for the reclaiming of those who are abandoned?" And so the very sight of sin accused you of negligence and the very hearing of evil was made use of by God to convict you of another evil! Oh, if we kept our eyes open, there is not an ox in the meadow, nor a sparrow in the tree which might not sometimes suggest a rebuke! There is not a star in midnight—there is not a ray in the noonday but what might suggest to us some evil that is hidden in our hearts and lead us to investigate our inner man—if we were but awake to the soft whispers of Jehovah's rebukes! You know our Savior made use of little things to rebuke His disciples. He said, "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow. Behold the fowls of the air how they are fed!" So He made lilies and ravens speak to His disciples, to upbraid their discontent. Earth is full of monitors—all that we need are ears to hear. However, when these rebukes all fail, God proceeds from rebuke to correction. He will not always chide. But if His rebukes are unheeded, then He grasps the rod and He uses it! I need not tell you how it is that God uses the rod. My brothers and sisters, you have all been made to tingle with it. He has sometimes smitten you in your persons, sometimes in your families, frequently in your estates, oftentimes in your prospects. He has smitten you in your nearest and dearest friend. Or, worse still, it may be He has given you "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet you." But you all understand if you know anything of the life of a Christian, what the rod and the staff of the covenant are and what it is to be corrected by God! Let me just particularize for a few minutes and show what it is that God corrects in us.

Very frequently God corrects *inordinate affection*. It is right of us to love our relatives—it is wrong of us to love them more than God. You, perhaps, are today guilty of this sin. At any rate, beloved, we may, most of us, look at home when we come to dwell on this point. Have we not some favored one—perhaps the partner of our heart, or the offspring of our bosom more dear to us than life, itself? Have I not here some man whose life is bound up in the life of the lad, his child?—some mother whose whole soul is knit unto the soul of her baby?—some wife, some husband, to whom the loss of the partner would be the loss of life? Oh there are many of us who are guilty of inordinate affection towards relations! Mark you, God will rebuke us for that! Sometimes He will rebuke us by the minister. If that is not enough, He will rebuke us by sending

sickness or disease to those very persons upon whom we have set our hearts! And if that rebukes us not and if we are not zealous to repent, He will chasten us—the sickness shall yet be unto death, the disease shall break forth with more fearful violence and the thing which we have made our idol shall be smitten and shall become the food of worms! There never was an idol that God either did not or will not pull out of its place. “I am the Lord your God. I am a jealous God.” And if we put any, however good and excellent their characters may be, and however deserving of our affection, upon God’s throne, God will cry, “Down with it!” And we shall have to weep many tears. But if we had not done so, we might have preserved the treasure and have enjoyed it far better, without having lost it.

But other men are baser than this. One can easily overlook the fault of making too much of children and wife and friends, although very grievous in the sight of God. But alas, there are some who are too sordid to love flesh and blood—they love dirt, mere dirty earth—yellow gold! It is that on which they set their hearts. Their purse, they tell us, is dross. But when we come to take anything from it, we find they do not think it is so. “Oh,” said a man once, “if you want a subscription from me, sir, you must get at my heart and then you will get at my purse.” “Yes,” I said, “I have no doubt I shall, for I believe that is where your purse lies and I shall not be very far off from it.” And how many there are who call themselves Christians who make a god out of their wealth! Their park, their mansion, their estate, their warehouses, their large ledgers, their many clerks, their expanding business—or if not these, their opportunity to retire, their money in the government stocks! All these things are their idols and their gods and we take them into our churches and the world finds no fault with them. They are prudent men! You know many of them. They are very respectable people. They hold many respectable positions and they are so prudent—but the love of money, which is the root of all evil—is in their hearts too plainly to be denied! Everyone may see it, though perhaps they see it not themselves. “Covetousness, which is idolatry,” reigns very much in the church of the living God! Well, mark you, God will chasten for that! Whoever loves mammon among God’s people shall first be rebuked for it, as he is rebuked by me this day. And if that rebuke is not taken, there shall be a chastisement given! It may be that the gold shall melt like the snowflake before the sun, or if it is preserved it shall be said, “Your gold and silver are cankered. The moth shall eat up your garments and destroy your glory.” Or else the Lord will bring leanness into their souls and cause them to go down to their graves with few honors on their heads and with little comfort in their hearts because they loved their gold more than their God—and valued earthly riches more than the riches that are eternal! The Lord save us from that, or else He will surely correct us!

But this is not the only sin—we are all subject to another crime which God exceedingly abhors! It is the sin of *pride*. If the Lord gives us a little comfort, we grow so big that we hardly know what to do with ourselves! Like Jeshurun of old, of whom it is said, “Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked,” if for a little time we enjoy the full assurance of faith—self-conceit whispers—“You will retain the savor of that all your days.” And there is not quite a whisper but something even fainter than that—“You now have no need to depend upon the influence of the Holy Spirit. See what a great man you have grown into! You have become one of the Lord’s most valued people. You are a Samson. You may pull down the very gates of hell and fear not! You have no need to cry, ‘Lord, have mercy upon me.’” Or at other times it takes a different turn. He gives us temporal mercies and then we presumptuously say, “My mountain stands firm. I shall never be moved.” We meet with the poor saints and we begin to lord over them as if we were something and they were nothing! We find some in trouble—we have no sympathy with them. We are gruff and blunt with them as we talk with them about their troubles. Yes, we are even savage and cruel with them! We meet with some who are in deep distress and faint-hearted. We begin to forget when we were faint-hearted, too, and because they cannot run as fast as we can, we run far ahead and turn back and look at them, call them sluggards and say they are idle and lazy! And perhaps even in the pulpit, if we are preachers, we have got hard words to say against those who are not quite as advanced as we are. Well, mark—there never was a saint yet who grew proud of his fine feathers, but what the Lord plucked them out, by-and-by! There never yet was an angel who had pride in his heart but he lost his wings and fell into Gehenna as Satan and those fallen angels did! And there shall never be a saint who indulges self-conceit and pride and self-confidence, but the Lord will spoil his glories and trample his honors in the mire and make him cry out yet again, “Lord have mercy upon me, less than the least of all saints, and the very chief of sinners.”

Another sin that God rebukes is sloth. Now I need not stop to picture that. How many of you are the finest specimens of sloth that can be discovered? I mean not in a business sense, for you are “not slothful in business,” but with regard to the things of God and the cause of truth! Why, nine out of ten of all the professors of religion, I do hazard the assertion, are as full of sloth as they can be! Take our churches all around and there is not a corporation in the world, however corrupt, that is less attentive to its professed interest than the church of Christ! There certainly are many societies and establishments in the world that deserve much blame for not attending to those interests which they ought to promote. But I truly think the church of God is the biggest culprit of all! She says that she is the preacher of the gospel to the poor—does she preach it to them? Yes, here and there—now and then there is a spas-

modic effort—but how many are there who have got tongues to speak and ability to utter God’s word that are content to be still? She professes to be the educator of the ignorant and so she is, in a measure—but there are many of you who have no business to be here this morning—you ought to have been teaching in the Sunday school, or instructing the young and teaching others. You have no need of teachers just now—you have learned the truth and should have been teaching it to other people! The church professes that she is yet to cast the light of the gospel throughout the world. She does a little in missionary enterprise. But ah, how little! How little! How little compared with what her Master did for her and the claims of Jesus upon her! We are a lazy set! Take the church all round—we are as idle as we can be! And we have need to have some whipping times of persecution to whip a little more earnestness and zeal into us! We thank God this is not so much the case now as it was even 12 months ago. We hope the church may progress in her zeal, but if not, she as a whole and each of us as members will be first rebuked—and if we take not the rebuke—we shall afterwards be chastened for this, our great sin!

I have no time to enter into all the other reasons for which God will rebuke and chasten. Suffice it to say that every sin has one twig in God’s rod appropriated to itself; suffice it to say that in God’s hand there are punishments for each particular transgression. And it is very singular to notice how in Bible history almost every saint has been chastened for the sin he has committed by the sin itself falling upon his own head! Transgression has been first a pleasure and afterwards it has been a scourge. “The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways,” and that is the most severe punishment in the entire world!

Thus I have tried to open the first head—it is that *God rebukes and chastens*.

II. Now, secondly, WHY DOES GOD REBUKE AND CHASTEN? “Why,” says one, “God rebukes His children because they are His children! And He chastens them because they are His children!” Well, I will not go the length of saying that is false, but I will go the length of saying it is not true! If anyone should say to a father, after he had chastened his child, “Why is it you have chastened the child?” he would not say, “It is because I am his father.” It is true in one sense but he would say, “I have chastened the child because he has done wrong.” The primary reason why he had chastened his child would not be that he was his father, but the absolute cause would be, “I have chastened him because he has done wrong, because I wish to correct him for it, that he might not do so again.” Now, God, when He chastens His children, never does it absolutely because He is their Father. But, He does it for a wise reason. He has some other reason besides His Fatherhood. At the same time, one reason why God afflicts His children and not others is because He is their Fa-

ther. If you were to go home today and see a dozen boys in the streets throwing stones and breaking windows, it is very likely you would chase the whole lot of them. But if there is one boy that would get a sweet knock on the head, it would be your own, for you would say, "What are you doing, John? What business have you here?" You might not be justified, perhaps, in meddling with the others—you would let their own fathers attend to them. But because you were his father, you would try to make him remember it! Certain special chastisements are inflicted on God's children because they are His children, but it is not because they are His children that He chastens them at any one time, but because they have been doing something wrong! Now, if you are under chastisement, let this truth be certain to you. Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret sin within you? Are you chastened in your business? Then what sin have you committed? Are you cast down in your spirit? Then what transgression has brought this on you? Remember, it is not fair to say, "I am chastened because I am His child." The right way to say it is, "I am His child and therefore when He chastens me, He has a reason for it." Now, what is it? I will help you to judge.

Sometimes God chastens and afflicts us *to prevent sin*. He sees that the embryo of lust is in our hearts. He sees that that little egg of mischief is beginning to hatch and to produce sin—and He comes and crushes it at once—nips the sin in the bud. Ah, we cannot tell how much guilt Christians have been saved from by their afflictions! We are running on madly to our destruction and then some dark apparition of trouble comes and stretches itself across the way—and in great fright we fly back astonished! We ask, why this trouble? Oh, if we knew the deluge into which we were rushing, we should only say, "Lord, I thank You that by that direful trouble You did save me from a sin that would have been far more troublous and infinitely more dangerous."

At other times God chastens us for sins already committed. We perhaps have forgotten them. But God has not. I think that sometimes years elapse between a sin and the chastisement for it. The sins of our youth may be punished in our gray old age—the transgressions you did 20 years ago, those of you who have grown old—may this very day be found in your bones! God chastens His children but He sometimes lays the rod by. The time would not be seasonable, perhaps. They are not yet strong enough to bear it—so He lays His rod by and He says, "As surely as he is My child, though I lay the rod by, I will make him smart for it, that I may at last deliver him from his sin and make him like unto Myself." But mark—you people of God—in all these chastisements for sin there is no *punishment*. When God chastises you, He does not *punish* as a judge does. He chastens as a father. When He lays the rod on with many blows and smart ones, there is not one thought of *anger* in His heart—there is not one look of *displeasure* in His eyes. He means it all for your good. His

heaviest blows are as much tokens of His affection as His sweetest caresses. He has no motive but your profit and His own glory. Be of good cheer, then, if these are the reasons, but take care that you fulfill the command—"Be zealous, therefore, and repent."

I read in an old Puritan author the other day a very pretty figure. He says, "A full wind is not so favorable to a ship when it is fully fair as a side wind. It is strange," says he, "that when the wind blows in an exact direction to blow a ship into port, she will not go near as well as if she had a cross wind sideways upon her." And he explains it thus—"The mariners say that when the wind blows exactly fair, it only fills a part of the sails and it cannot reach the sails that are ahead, because the sail, bellying out with the wind, prevents the wind from reaching that which is further ahead. But when the wind sweeps sideways, then every sail is full and she is driven on swiftly in her course with the full force of the wind. Ah!" says the old Puritan, "there is nothing like a side wind to drive God's people to heaven! A fair wind only fills a part of their sails. That is, fills their joy, fills their delight. But," he says, "the side wind fills them all! It fills their caution, fills their prayerfulness, fills every part of the spiritual man and so the ship speeds onwards towards its haven." It is with this design that God sends affliction—to chasten us on account of our transgressions.

III. And now, I am to conclude by noting WHAT IS OUR COMFORT WHEN GOD REBUKES AND CHASTENS US?

Our great comfort is that He still *loves* us. Oh, what a precious thing faith is when we are enabled to believe our God and then how easy it is to endure and to surmount all trouble! Hear the old man in the attic, with a crust of bread and a cup of cold water. Sickiness has confined him these years within that narrow room. He is too poor to maintain an attendant. Some woman comes in to look on him in the morning and in the evening. And there he sits, in the depths of poverty. And you will suppose he sits and groans? No, brothers and sisters—he may sometimes groan when the body is weak, but usually he sits and sings! A visitor climbs the creaking staircase of that old house where human beings scarcely ought to be allowed to live. When he goes into that poor cramped room that is more fit to accommodate swine than men—he sits down upon that bottomless chair and when he has squatted himself as well as he can upon the four cross pieces of it—he begins to talk to him and he finds him full of heaven. "Oh, sir," he says, "my God is very kind to me." What?—propped up he is with pillows and full of pain in every member of his body—kind? But he says, "Blessed be His name, He has not left me. Oh, sir, I have enjoyed more peace and happiness in this room, out of which I have not gone for years"—(the case is real that I am now describing)—"I have enjoyed more happiness here than I ever did in all my life! My pains are great, sir, but they will not be for long—I am going Home soon." Yes,

were he more troubled still—had he such rich consolation poured into his heart he might endure all with a smile—and sing in the furnace! Now, child of God, you are to do the same. Remember, all you have to suffer is sent in love. It is hard work for a child when his father has been chastening it, to look at the rod as a picture of love. You cannot make your children do that—but when they grow up to be men and women, how thankful are they to you then? “O Father,” says the son, “I know now why it was I was so often chastened. I had a proud hot spirit. It would have been the ruin of me if you had not whipped it out of me. Now, I thank you, my Father, for it.”

So, while we are here below, we are nothing but little children. We cannot prize the rod—when we come of age and we go into our estates in paradise, we shall look back upon the rod of the covenant as being better than Aaron’s rod, for it blossoms with mercy! We shall say to it, “You are the most wondrous thing in all the list of my treasures. Lord, I thank You that You did not leave me unafflicted, or else I had not been where I am and what I am—a child of God in paradise.” “I have this week,” says one, “sustained so serious a loss in my business that I am afraid I shall be utterly broken up.” There is love in that. “I came here this morning,” says one, “and I left a dead child in the house—dear to my heart.” There is love in that. That coffin and that shroud will both be full of love. And when your child is taken away, it shall not be in anger. “Ah,” cries another, “but I have been exceedingly sick and even now I feel I ought not to have ventured out—I must return to my bed.” Ah, He makes your bed in your affliction! There is love in every pain, in every twitch of the nerve. In every pang that shoots through the members, there is love. “Ah,” says one, “it is not myself, but I have got a dear one that is sick.” There is love there, too. Do what God may, He cannot do an unloving act towards His people! O Lord! You are Omnipotent! You can do all things but You cannot lie and You cannot be unkind to the Elect. No, Omnipotence may build a thousand worlds and fill them with bounties. Omnipotence may powder mountains into dust and burn the sea and consume the sky. But Omnipotence cannot do an unloving thing towards a believer! Oh, rest quite sure, Christian, a hard thing, an unloving thing from God towards one of His own people is quite impossible. He is as kind to you when He casts you into prison as when he takes you into a palace! He is as good when He sends famine into your house as when He fills your barns with plenty! The only question is, Are you His child? If so, He has rebuked you in affection and there is love in His chastisement!

I am almost done but not until I have made my last appeal. I have now to turn from God’s people to the rest of you. Ah, my hearers, there are some of you who have no God. You have no Christ on whom to cast your troubles! I see some of you today dressed in the clothes of mourning. I suppose you have lost someone dear to you. Oh, you that are robed in

black—is God your God? Or are you mourning without God to wipe every tear from your eyes? I know that many of you are now struggling in your business with very sharp and hard times. Can you tell your troubles to Jesus, or have you to bear them all yourself—friendless and helpless? Many men have been driven mad because they had no one to whom to communicate their sorrow. And how many others have been driven worse than mad because when they told their sorrows, their confidence was betrayed? O poor mourning spirit, if you had, as you might have done, gone and told Him all your woes, He would not have laughed at you! And He would never have told it out again. Oh, I remember when once my young heart ached in boyhood, when I first loved the Savior. I was far away from father and mother and all I loved and I thought my soul would burst. I was an usher in a school in a place where I could meet with no sympathy or help. Well, I went to my chamber and told my little griefs into the ears of Jesus. They were great griefs to me then, though they are nothing now. When I just whispered them on my knees into the ears of Him who had loved me with an everlasting love, oh, it was so sweet, none can tell! If I had told them to somebody else, they would have told them again. But He, my blessed confidante, He knows my secrets and He never tells again! Oh, what can you do, you that have got no Jesus to tell your troubles to? And the worst of it is, you have got more troubles to come—times may be hard now but they will be harder one day—they will be harder when they come to an end. They say it is hard to live, but it is very hard to die. When one comes to die and has Jesus with him, even then dying is hard work. But to die without a Savior! Oh, my friends, are you inclined to risk it? Will you face the grim monarch and no Savior with you? Remember, you must do it, you must die soon! The chamber shall soon be hushed in silence. No sound shall be heard except the babbling watch that always tells the flight of time. The physician shall, “Hush!” and hold up his finger and whisper in a suppressed voice, “He cannot last many minutes longer.” And the wife and the children, or the father and the mother, will stand around your bed and look at you, as I have looked at some, with a sad, sad heart. They will look at you a little while, till at last the death change will pass over your face. “He is gone!” it shall be said. And the hand uplifted shall be dropped down again and the eyes shall be glazed in darkness and then the mother will turn away and say, “O my child, I could have borne all this if there had been hope in the end!” And when the minister comes in to comfort the family, he will ask the question of the father, “Do you think your son had an interest in the blood of Christ?” The reply will be, “O sir, we must not judge but I never saw anything like it. I never had any reason to hope—that is my greatest sorrow.” There, there! I could bury every friend without a tear, compared with the burial of an ungodly friend! Oh, it seems such an awful thing to have one allied to you by ties of blood, dead and in hell!

We generally speak very softly about the dead. We say, “Well, we hope.” Sometimes we tell great lies for we know we do not hope at all. We wish it may be so, but we cannot hope it. We never saw any grounds that should lead us to hope. But would it not be an awful thing if we were honest enough to look the dread reality in its face—if the husband were simply to look at it and say, “There was my wife. She was an ungodly, careless woman. I know she never said anything concerning repentance and faith. And if she died so—and I have every reason to fear she did—then she is cast away from God”? It would be unkind to say it. But it is only honest for us to know it—to look dread truth in the face. Oh, my fellow brothers and sisters! Oh, you who are partners with me of an immortal life! We shall one day meet again before the throne of God. But before that time comes, we shall each of us be separated and go our different ways down the shelving banks of the river of death. My fellow man, are you prepared to die alone? I ask you this question again—Are you prepared to arise in the day of judgment without a Savior? Are you willing to run all risks and face your Maker when He comes to judge, you without an Advocate to plead your cause? Are you prepared to hear Him say, “Depart you cursed!”? Are you ready now to endure the everlasting ire of Him who smites and smiting once, does smite forever? Oh, if you will make your bed in hell; if you are prepared to be damned; if you are willing to be so, then live in sin and indulge in pleasures—you will get your wish! But if you would not, if you would enter heaven and you would be saved, “Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?” May God the Holy Spirit enable you to repent of sin and to believe on Jesus! And then you shall have a portion among them who are sanctified—but unrepentant and unbelieving, if you die so, you must be driven from His Presence—never to have life and joy and liberty as long as eternity shall last!

The Lord prevent this, for Jesus’ sake.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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END OF VOLUME 3