



Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 8: 1863

by

Charles Spurgeon

About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 8: 1863* by Charles Spurgeon

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Table of Contents

<i>About This Book</i>	p. ii
Sermon 432. A Voice from the Hartley Colliery.	p. 1
Sermon 442. God's Will and Man's Will.	p. 10
Sermon 446. The Old, Old Story.	p. 19
Sermon 456. The Stony Heart Removed.	p. 27
Sermon 457. Religion—a Reality.	p. 34
Sermon 458. The Friend of Sinners.	p. 44
Sermon 460. Faith and Repentance Inseparable.	p. 54
Sermon 477. Never! Never! Never! Never! Never!.	p. 64
Sermon 478. Christ—Perfect Through Sufferings.	p. 74
Sermon 479. Christian Sympathy.	p. 84
Sermon 480. A Message from God for Thee.	p. 94
Sermon 481. A Drama in Five Acts.	p. 105
Sermon 482. The Royal Pair in Their Glorious Chariot.	p. 115
Indexes.	p. 125
Index of Scripture References.	p. 125
Index of Scripture Commentary.	p. 125

A Voice from the Hartley Colliery

A Sermon

(No. 432)

Delivered on Thursday Evening, January 30th, 1862, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"If a man die, shall he live again?—Job 14:14.

ONCE MORE THE LORD has spoken. Once again the voice of Providence has proclaimed "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of grass." O sword of the Lord, when wilt thou rest and be quiet? Wherefore these repeated warnings? Why doth the Lord so frequently and so terribly sound an alarm? Is it not because our drowsy spirits will not awaken to the realities of death? We fondly persuade ourselves that we are immortal, that though a thousand may fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand, yet death shall not come nigh unto us. We flatter ourselves that if we must die, yet the evil day is far hence. If we be sixty, we presumptuously reckon upon another twenty years of life; and the man of eighty, tottering upon his staff, remembering that some few have survived to the close of a century, sees no reason why he should not do the same. If man cannot kill death, he tries at least to bury him alive; and since death will intrude himself in man's pathway, we endeavor to shut our eyes to the ghastly object. God in providence is continually filling our path with tombs. With kings and princes there is too much forgetfulness of the world to come; God has, therefore, spoken to *them*. They were but few in number; one death might be sufficient in their case. That one death of a beloved and illustrious prince will leave its mark on courts and palaces. As for the workers, they also are wishful to put far from them the thought of the coffin and the shroud: God has spoken to *them* also. There were many; one death would not be sufficient; it was absolutely necessary that there should be many victims, or we should have disregarded the warning. Two hundred witnesses cry to us from the pit's mouth, a solemn fellowship of preachers all using the same text, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" If God had not thus spoken by the destruction of many, we should have said, "Ah, it is a common occurrence; there are frequently such accidents as these?" The rod would have failed in its effect had it smitten less severely. The awful calamity at the Hartley Colliery has at least had this effect, that men are talking of death in all our streets. Oh! Father of thy people, send forth thy Holy Spirit in richer abundance, that by this solemn chastisement higher ends may be answered than merely attracting our thoughts to our latter end. Oh! may hearts be broken, may eyes be made to weep for sin, may follies be renounced, may Christ be accepted, and may spiritual life be given as the result of temporal death to the many who now sleep in their untimely graves in Earsdon churchyard.

This text is appropriate to the occasion, but God alone knoweth how applicable the discourse may be to some here present; yes, to young hearts little dreaming that there is but a step between them and death; to aged persons, who as yet have not set their house in order, but who must do it, for they shall die and not live. We will take the question of the text, and answer it upon Scriptural grounds. "If a man die, shall he live again?" NO!—YES!

I. We answer the question first with a "No." He shall not live again here; he shall not again mingle with his fellows, and repeat the life which death has brought to a close. This is true of him

with regard to himself, and equally true with regard to his neighbors. Shall he live again for himself? No. Shall he live again for his household? No.

1. Dwell for a moment on the first thought. "If a man die, shall he live again." *Shall he live for himself.* No; if he hath lived and died a sinner, that sinful life of his shall never be repeated. Sinner, thou mayest empty the cups of drunkenness in this world throughout a long life, but thou shalt never have another season to spend in intoxication! Thou who hast broken through all the bounds of morality, thou mayest live in this life debauched, depraved, and devilish, but death shall put an end to thy career of lust. Let the cup be sweet; it is the last time thou shalt ever drink it. If there be any pleasures in sin, thou shalt never taste them again. The sweets shall be over once for all, and at the bottom thou shalt find the bitter dregs which shall be gall for ever. Once thou shalt insult high heaven, but not twice. Once shalt thou have space to blaspheme; once shalt thou have time proudly to array thyself in self-righteousness; once shalt thou have power to despise the Christ who is the Savior of men, *but not twice.* The longsuffering of God shall wait for thee through thy life of provocations; but thou shalt not be born again into this world; thou shalt not a second time defile its air with blasphemies, nor blot its beauties with impiety. Thou shalt not live again to forget the God who hath daily loaded thee with mercies. Thou hast thy daily bread now; the clothes that are on thy back shelter thee from the cold; thou goest to thy house, and thou hast comforts and mercies there, but like the swine which feed beneath the oak forgetful of the green bough which yields the acorn, or like the brute which is content to eat the grass, but never thanks the sun or the cloud which nourished the pasture, so thou livest in this world, forgetful of the God who made thee, in whom thou livest, and movest, and hast thy being. In this life thou art unthankful but thou shalt have no further opportunity for this ingratitude. All thy candles shall go out in eternal darkness. There shall be no more dainty meals for thee; no more joyous holidays, no more quiet slumbers. Every mercy shall be taken from thee. That which makes life desirable shall be removed if thou diest impenitent, till thou shalt hate thine existence and count it thy highest blessing if thou couldst cease to be. Thou shalt not live again, I say, to treat thy God worse than the ox treateth its owner. The ass knoweth his master's crib, but thou knowest not, though thou shalt know, for this is the last season in which thou shalt play the brute. My dear hearers, many of you have something more than the common mercies of God, you have his Word, Sabbath after Sabbath, preached in your ears. I may say truthfully concerning you who attend this house of prayer, that you hear one who, when he fails for want of power, fails not for want of will to do you good; one who has not shunned to warn you, and to preach in all simplicity the whole counsel of God, so far as he has been taught it by the Holy Spirit. If you die you shall not live again to stifle the voice of your conscience, and to quench the Spirit of God. You shall have no more Sabbaths to mis-spend when this life is over. There shall be no church bells for you, after your knell is tolled. No affectionate voice shall beseech you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. No warning hand shall point you to the cross; no loving lip shall cry, "This is the way; walk ye in it." Ye have your last warnings *now* sinners; if ye reject them ye shall have no more. Ye hear in this life your last invitations; despise them, and the door shall be shut in your face for ever. Christ is lifted up before your eyes, look to him now and live; refuse him, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, and no other life in which you may lay hold of him.

Fix'd is their everlasting state,
 Could man repent, 'tis then too late;
 Justice has closed mercy's door,
 And God's longsuffering is no more.

Here you may have a mother to weep for you; a wife to pray for you, friends who will counsel you; the blessings of a Christian country, an open Bible, and a house of prayer, but it is your last time. Now or never; now or never. Lost in time; lost in eternity; saved now, saved for ever. Sinner, it is thy last turn. Will thou choose to be damned? Then damned thou art without hope! May God save thee now, and saved thou art beyond fear of perishing. But it is thy last, thine only opportunity. Where the tree falleth there it must lie for ever.

"Return, O wanderer to thy home,
 'Tis madness to delay;
 There are no pardons in the tomb,
 And brief is mercy's day.
 Return! Return!"

Solemnly let us say it, awful as it appears, it is well that the sinner should not live again in this world. "Oh!" you will say, when you are dying, "if I could but live again, I would not sin as I once did." When you are in the pit of hell, perhaps your pride will lead you to imagine that if you could come back to earth again you would be another man. Ah! but you would not be so! Unless you had a new heart and a right spirit, if you could live again, you would live as you did before. Keep the fountain unchanged, and the same streams will flow. Let the cause remain, and the same effects will follow. If the lost spirits could escape from hell, they would sin as they did before; if they could again listen to the gospel they would again reject it, for he that is filthy will be filthy still; the flames of hell shall work no change in character; for they have no sanctifying influence; they punish, but they do not cleanse. Sinners, it is well that you will not live again, for if you did you would but increase your condemnation. There would be two lives of sin, of rejection of Christ, of unbelief, and, if it were possible, hell would then be less tolerable for you than it shall be now. Oh! my poor dying hearers, by the corpses in the dark smothering gas of Hartley Pit, I pray you be awakened, for *your* death-hour is hastening on, and you have but to-day in which to find a Savior.

"Sinner beware.—the axe of death,
 Is raised and aimed at thee:
 Awhile thy Maker spares thy breath,
 Beware, O barren tree."

Every time you hear your clock tick, let it say to you, "*Now or never, NOW OR NEVER, NOW OR NEVER.*"

In the case of the child of God, it is the same, so far as he himself is concerned, when he dies he shall not live again. No more shall he bitterly repent of sin; no more lament the plague of his own heart, and tremble under a sense of deserved wrath. No more shall the godly pitman suffer for righteousness' sake, despising the sneer of his comrades. The battle is once fought: it is not to be repeated. If God hath safely guided the ship across the sea and brought it to its desired haven, it casteth anchor for ever, and goeth not out a second time into the storm. Like those earnest Methodist miners, we have one life of usefulness, of service, of affliction, of temptation; one life in which to glorify God on earth in blessing our fellow-men; one life in which faith may be tried and love made perfect; one life in which we may prove the faithfulness of God in providence; and one life in which we may see Christ triumphant over sin in our mortal bodies, but we shall not return to the scene of conflict.

Brethren is it not a mercy for you and for me if we be in Christ, that our furnace is not to be re-lit? Oh, brethren, it were unkind for us to wish back the dead! Ah, when we think of those

brethren, those men of God, who in the pit held prayer meeting when they knew that the fatal gas would soon take away their lives; though we look at their weeping widows and their sorrowing children, it were wrong to wish them back again. What would any of us who fear God think, if we were once in heaven? Would not the very suggestion of return, though it were to the most faithful spouse and best-beloved children, be a cruelty? What, bring back again to battle the victor who wears the crown! Drag back to the storm and the tempest, the mariner who has gained the strand! What, bring me back again to pain and sorrow, to temptation, and to sin? No. Blessed be thou, O God, that all the wishes of friends shall not accomplish this, for we shall be

"Far from this world of grief and sin,
With God, eternally shut in."

This world is not so lovely as to tempt us away from heaven. Here we are strangers and foreigners; here we have no abiding city; but we seek one to come. There is one wilderness, but we bless God there are not two. There is one Jordan to be crossed, but there is not another. There is one season when we must walk by faith and not by sight, and be fed with manna from heaven; but blessed be God there is not another, for after that comes the Canaan—the rest which remaineth for the people of God. What man among ye, immersed in the cares of business, would desire two lives? Who, that is tired to-day with the world's noise, and vexed with its temptations; who that has come from a bed of sickness; who that is conscious of sin, would wish to leave the haven when once it is reached? As well might galley-slave long to return to his oar, or captive to his dungeon? No, blessed be God, the souls which have ascended from the colliery to glow are not to leave their starry spheres, but rest in Christ for ever.

2. But now we pass to the other thought under this first head. If a man die, shall he live again?" *Shall he live for others?* No. The sinner shall not live to do damage to others. If there were any fathers who perished in the pit who had neglected the training of their children, they cannot live again to educate them for Christ. If there were any there (we hope there were not, and there is a hopeful sign, for I am told that there was not a single public-house within a mile of the village), but if there were there any who by their ill example taught others to sin, they shall never do it again. If there were any there who led others astray, by bold speeches against God, they have done once for all their life's-mischiefs. And so with each of us to-night. Do I speak to one here who is living a useless life; a tree planted in rich soil but bearing no fruit; a creature made by God but rendering him no service? Do I not speak to some such to-night? I know I do. You cannot be charged with outward vice, or with positive irregularity of conduct, but still it may be said of you, "I was an hungred and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; naked and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison and ye visited me not." Ye have not done it unto one of the least of these his brethren, and ye have not done it unto Christ. It is not necessary to do anything in order to be lost. The way to perdition is very simple; it is only a little matter of neglect. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." Well, sinner, this is the last life of negligence that you shall ever spend; the very last season when you shall turn upon your heel and say, "Ha! ha! there is nothing in it!" The last time in which you shall put off the messenger by saying, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." The neglect of our own souls is a most solemn mischief to others. When others see that we neglect, they take courage and neglect too.

"One sickly sheep infests the flock,
And poisons all the rest."

But there are others whose example is bad. What sorrow it is to notice men who carry the infection of sin wherever they go about them. In some of our villages, and especially in our towns, we have men who are reeking dung-hills of corruption. To put them by the side of a youth for an hour would be almost as dangerous as to make that youth walk through Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. Men who, as Saul breathed out threatenings, breathe out lasciviousness. Ah! do I speak to such a wretch? It is thy last rebellion—thy last revolt. Thou shalt never do this again. Never again shalt thou lead others down to hell, and drag them to the pit with thee. Remember that. And some there be who not only by example, but by overt teaching drive others astray. We have still, in this enlightened Christian land, wretches who boast the name of "infidel lecturer;" whose business it is to pervert men's minds by hard speeches against the majesty of heaven. Let them labor hard if they mean to subvert Jehovah's throne, for they have little time to do it in. Well may the enemies of the Lord of Hosts be desperately in earnest, for they have an awful work to do, and if they consider the puny strength with which they go forth to battle against the Judge of all the earth, and the brevity of the time that can be given to the struggle, well may they work and toil. This is their only time their sure damnation draweth nigh. Hushed shall be their high words; cold shall be their hot and furious hearts. God shall crush them in his anger, and destroy them in his hot displeasure. If a man die, he shall not live again to scatter hemlock seed, and sow sin in furrows. I do not know what your life is my friend. You have stepped in here to-night; it is not often you are in a place of worship, but listen now. You know that to your family you are sometimes a terror, and always an ill example. Ah, you are a co-worker with Satan now, but God shall put you where you shall do no more hurt to that fair child of yours; where you shall not teach your boy to drink; where you shall not instil into your daughter's mind unholy thoughts. The time shall come, masters, when you shall be taken away from those men who imitate you in your evil ways. The time shall be over with you working-man yonder, you shall not much longer jeer at the righteous, and sneer at the godly. You will find it hard work to laugh at the saints when you get into hell. You will find when God comes to deal with you, and your life is over, that it will be utterly impossible for you then to call them fools, for you will be thinking yourself the greatest fool that ever was, that you did not, like them, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Well, jeer and joke, and point the finger, and slander, and persecute as you may; it is the last time, and you shall never have another opportunity to mock the saints. O remember, it were better for you that a mill-stone were about your neck, and that you were cast into the depths of the sea than that you should thus offend Christ's little ones. Well, I think we may say it is a great mercy that the sinner shall not live again in this sense. What, bring him back again—that old drunkard of the village tap-room, restore him to life? No, no; good men breathed more freely when he was gone. What, bring back that vile old blasphemer who used to curse God? No, no; he vexed the righteous long enough; let him abide in his place. What, bring back that lewd, lascivious wretch to seduce others and lead them astray? What, bring back that thief to train others to his evil deeds? Bring back that self-righteous man who was always speaking against the gospel, and striving to prejudice other men's minds against gospel light? No, no. With all our love of one man, the love of many is stronger still, and we could not wish for the temporary and seeming good of one, to permit him to go raging, among others. Natural benevolence might suggest even the loosing of a lion as a creature, but a greater benevolence says, "No, let him be chained, or he will rend others." We might not wish to crush even a serpent. Let it live, it has its own sphere and its own enjoyment. But if the serpent creep among men, where it can bite and infuse its poison into human veins, let it die. Without compunction we say it,—"It were better that one

man should die for the nation, that the whole nation perish not." If a man die then, as far as others are concerned, he shall not live again to curse his kind.

And now, me remind you that it is the same with the saint, "If a man die, shall he live again?" No. This is our season to pray for our fellow-men, and it is a season which shall never return. Mother, you shall never come back to pray for your daughters and your sons again! Ministers, this is your time to preach. We shall never have an opportunity of being God's ambassadors anymore. Oh! when I sometimes think of this, I am ashamed that I can preach with dry eyes, and that sobs do not choke my utterance. Methinks if I were lying upon my dying bed, I might often say, "O Lord, would that I could preach again, and once more warn poor souls." I think Baxter says he never came out of his pulpit without sighing, because he had played his part so ill, and yet who ever preached more earnestly than he? And so, at times when we have felt the weight of souls, yet in looking back, we have thought we did not feel it as we should; and when we have stood by the corpse of one of our own hearers, we have had the reflection, "Would that I could have talked more personally, and spoken more earnestly, to this man!" I often feel that if God should ever permit me to say I am clear of the blood of you all, it is about as much as I can ever hope to have, for that must be heaven to a man, to feel that God has delivered him out of his ministry, it is such an awful thing to be responsible before God for the souls of men. "If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." And so, remember, it is with each one of you. Now is your time to rescue the fallen, to teach the ignorant, to carry the lambs in your bosom, or to restore the wandering; now is your season for liberality to the Church, for care of the poor, for consecration to Christ's service, and for devotion to his cause. If there could be sorrow among the spirits that are crowding around the throne of Christ, methinks it would be this, that they had not labored more abundantly, and were not more instant in season and out of season in doing good. If those godly pitmen over whom we mourn tonight, had not done their utmost while they were here, the deficiency could never be made up. Let me commend to you the example of some of those who were in the pit, praying and exhorting their fellow men just as they were all in the last article of death. They were Primitive Methodists. Let their names clothe Primitive Methodism with eternal honor! I conceive that in employing poor unlettered men to preach, the plan of the Primitive Methodists is New Testament and Scriptural policy. Such methods of usefulness we have endeavored to pursue, and hope to do so yet more fully. The Primitive Methodists think that a man may preach who never went to college; that a man may preach to his fellow-miners even though he cannot speak grammatically; and hence they do not excite their ministers to labor after literary attainments, but after the souls of men; and the local preachers are chosen solely and wholly for their power to speak from the heart, and to make their fellow-men feel. We should have done more for London if we had not been so squeamish. Real Primitive Methodism we have seen in London, in the person of Mr. Richard Weaver; and if you would put a score of the ministers who have preached in the theatres altogether, they would not have made one such a man as Richard Weaver, for real effect upon the masses. And yet what teaching had he, and what wisdom? None, but that he feels the power of God in his own soul, and speaks out of his heart, roughly and rudely, but still mightily to others. We want all our Churches to feel that they must not say, "Who is John So-and-so? He is only a cobbler; he must not preach. What is Tom So-and-so? He is only a carpenter; why should he preach?" Ah, these are the men who shook the world; these are the men whom God used to destroy old Rome. With all our gettings, while we seek to get education in the ministry, we must take care that we do not despise those things that are not, which God shall make mightier than the

things that are: and those base things which God hath chosen to stain the pride of human glorying, and to bring into contempt all the excellent of the earth. I know that I address some working men here. Working men, oh, that you knew Christ in your own hearts as they did in the Hartley pit! You see they had no preacher down there. Do not get the notion that you want a minister in order to come to Christ. Priestcraft is a thing we hate, and as you hate it too, we are quite one in that opinion. I preach the Word, but what am I more than you? If you can preach to edification, I pray you do so. Your poor brethren in the pit, though not set apart to that work, were yet as true priests unto the living God, and ministers for Christ, as any of us. So be you. Hasten to work while it is called to-day; gird up your loins and run the heavenly race for the sun is setting never to rise again upon this land.

II. "If a man die shall he live again?" Yes, yes, that he shall. He does not die like a dog; he shall live again; not here, but in another and a better or a more terrible land. The soul, we know, never dies, but when it leaves the clay it mounts to sing with angels or descends to howl with fiends. The body itself shall live again. The corpses in the pit were some of them swollen with foul air; some of them could scarcely be recognized, but as the seed corn has not lost its vitality, shrivelled though it be, neither have those bodies. They are now sown, and they shall spring up either to bear the image of condemnation, or of immortality and life. Scattered to the winds of heaven, devoured of beasts, mixed with other substances and other bodies, yet every atom of the human body has been tracked by the eye of omniscience, and shall be gathered to its proper place by the hand of omnipotence. The Lord knoweth every particle of the bodies of them that are his. All men, whether they be righteous or wicked, shall certainly live again in the body, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. This much cometh to all men through Christ, that all men have a resurrection. But more than that. They shall all live again in the eternal state; either for ever glorified with God in Christ, blessed with the holy angels, for ever shut in from all danger and alarm; or in that place appointed for banished spirits who have shut themselves out from God, and now find that God has shut them out from him. They shall live again, in weal or woe, in bliss or bane, in heaven or in hell. Now ye that are unconverted, think of this I pray you for a moment. Ye shall live again; let no one tempt you to believe the contrary. Whatever they shall say, and however speciously they may put it, mark this word—you shall not rot in the tomb for ever; there shall not be an end of you when they shall say "Earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes." Ye shall live again. And hark thee, sinner; let me hold thee by the hand a moment; *thy sins shall live again*. They are not dead. Thou hast forgotten them, but God has not. Thou hast covered them over with the thick darkness of forgetfulness, but they are in his book, and the day shall come when all the sins that thou hast done shall be read before the universe and published in the light of day. What sayest thou to this, sinner? The sins of thy youth, thy secret sins—oh! man, let that thought pierce through thee like a point of steel, and cut thee to the very quick—thy sins shall live again. *And thy conscience shall live*. It is not often alive now. It is quiet, almost as quiet as the dead in the grave. But it shall soon awaken, the trumpet of the archangel shall break its long sleep; depend on that; the terrors of hell shall make thee lift up thine eyes which have so long been heavy with slumber. You have had an awakened conscience, but then you are still in the land of hope, you will find however that an awakened conscience when there is no Christ to flee to is an awful thing. Remorse of conscience has brought many a man to the knife and to the halter. Ah, careless sinner, you dare not to-night sit up an hour alone and think over the past and the future; you know you dare not. But there will be no avoiding conscience hereafter, it speaks now, but it will thunder then; it whispers now, and

you may shut your ears, but its thunder-claps then shall so startle you that you cannot refuse to listen. Oh! transgressor, thy conscience shall live again, and shall be thy perpetual tormentor. Remember that *your victims shall live again*. Am I addressing any who have enticed companions into sin, and conducted friends to destruction? Your dupes shall meet you in another world and charge their ruin upon you. That young lad whom you led astray from the path of virtue shall point to you in hell and say, "He was my tempter." That woman—let us cover up that deed,—bright eyes shall sparkle upon you through the black darkness like the eyes of serpents, and you shall hear the hissing voice, "Thou didst bring me here," and you shall feel another hell in the hell of that other soul. Oh! God, save us, let the sins of our youth be covered. Oh, save us! Let the blood of Jesus be sprinkled on our conscience, for, there are none of us that dare meet our conscience alone! Shelter us, thou Rock of Ages. Deliver us from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation. Sinner, remember thy God shall live. Thou thinkest him nothing now; thou shalt see him then. Thy business now stops the way; the smoke of time dims thy vision; the rough blasts of death shall blow all this away, and thou shalt see clearly revealed to thyself the frowning visage of an angry God. A God in arms, sinner, a God in arms, and no scabbard for his sword; a God in arms, and no shelter for thy soul; a God in arms, and even rocks refusing to cover thee; a God in arms, and the hollow depths of earth denying thee a refuge! Fly, soul! while it is yet time: fly, the cleft in the rock is open now. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Fly, sinner, to the open arms of Jesus! Fly! for he casteth out none that come to him.

And then, lastly, as this is true of the sinner, so it is true of the saint. He shall live again. If in this life only we had hope, we were of all men the most miserable. If we knew that we must die and not live for ever, our brightest joys would be quenched; and in proportion to the joy we lost would be the sorrow which followed. We shall live again. Godly wife, thy Christian husband, though he perished by the fatal "damp," shall live again, and thou shalt sit with him before the eternal throne. He finished his life with prayer amid his comrades, he shall begin anew with praise amid the cherubim. Widow, bereaven of thy many children, thou hast lost them all; not lost we hope, but gone before. Oh! there shall be joy when every link that was snapped shall be re-fitted; when again the circle shall be completed, and all losses restored.

"Far, far removed from fear and pain,

Dear brethren we shall meet again."

That sweet hymn of the children is a blessed one after all—

"We shall meet to part no more."

Death, thou canst not rob us, thou canst not tear away a limb from Jesu's body! Thou canst not take away a single stone from the spiritual temple. Thou dost but transplant the flower, O death! thou dost not kill it. Thou dost but uproot it from the land of frost to flourish in the summer's clime; thou dost but take it from the place where it can only bud, to the place where it shall be full blown. Blessed be God for death, sweet friend of regenerated man! Blessed be God for the grave, safe wardrobe for these poor dusty garments till we put them on afresh glowing with angelic glory. Thrice blessed be God for resurrection, for immortality, and for the joy that shall be revealed in us. Brethren, my soul anticipates that day; let yours do the same. One gentle sigh and we fall asleep; perhaps we die as easily as those did in the colliery; we sleep into heaven, and wake up in Christ's likeness. When we have slept our last on earth, and open our eyes in heaven, oh! what a surprise!

No aching arm, no darkness of the mine, no chokedarnp, no labor and no sweat, no sin, no stain there! Brethren, is not that verse near the fact which says,

"We'll sing with rapture and surprise,
His loving kindness in the skies?"

Shall we not be surprised to find ourselves in heaven? What a new place for the poor sinner. From the coal mine to celestial spheres. From black and dusty toil to bright and heavenly bliss. Above ground once for all, ay and above the skies too. Oh! long-expected day begin! When shall it come? Hasten it, Lord.

Come death and some celestial hand,
To bear our souls away!"

I have thus tried to bring forward the text. Oh that the Lord, in whose name I desire to speak, may bless it to some among you. I have now to ask you kindly to think of those who are suffering through this terrible calamity. More than four hundred widows and orphans are left bereaved and penniless, for the working-man has little spare cash to provide for such contingencies. As a congregation we can do but little to alleviate so great a sorrow, let us, however, bear our part with others. I have no doubt the wealthier ones among you have already contributed in your different connexions, either through the Lord Mayor, or Mark Lane, or the Coal Market, or the Stock Exchange, or in some other way, but there are many of you who have not done so, and those who have may like an opportunity of doing so again. Let us do what we can to-night, that we may show our gratitude to God for having spared our lives; and as we drop our money into the box, let us offer a prayer that this solemn affliction may be blessed to all in the land, and that so Christ may be glorified.

The preacher desires to bear testimony to the hearty sympathy which led his audience, on a cold wet evening to assemble in considerable numbers, and which opened up their hearts to subscribe £120 for the bereaved. May the Lord bind up the bleeding hearts!

* This sermon was preached to commemorate the Hartley Mining Disaster of 16 January 1862—exactly two weeks prior to the preaching of this message. In one of the most horrific mining disasters ever, 204 men and boys lost their lives when part of a giant cast iron beam (more than 20 tons of it) broke off the massive pumping engine and launched itself down the shaft, blocking the only exit and trapping more than 200 men in the vast underground coal pit. Although the remaining men of the town and hundreds from nearby communities laboured for days to try to open up a means of rescue, most of the men trapped in the pit probably succumbed to noxious gasses within 36 hours. At the time Spurgeon preached this message, bodies of the victims were still being recovered, and England was just coming to grips with the magnitude of the disaster. Pictures of a memorial erected near the disaster site may be viewed on the Web.

God's Will and Man's Will

A Sermon

(No. 442)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, March 30th, 1862, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."—Romans 9:16

"Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Revelation 22:17

The great controversy which for many ages has divided the Christian Church has hinged upon the difficult question of "the will." I need not say of that conflict that it has done much mischief to the Christian Church, undoubtedly it has; but I will rather say, that it has been fraught with incalculable usefulness; for it has thrust forward before the minds of Christians, precious truths, which but for it, might have been kept in the shade. I believe that the two great doctrines of human responsibility and divine sovereignty have both been brought out the more prominently in the Christian Church by the fact that there is a class of strong-minded hard-headed men who magnify sovereignty at the expense of responsibility; and another earnest and useful class who uphold and maintain human responsibility oftentimes at the expense of divine sovereignty. I believe there is a needs-be for this in the finite character of the human mind, while the natural lethargy of the Church requires a kind of healthy irritation to arouse her powers and to stimulate her exertions. The pebbles in the living stream of truth are worn smooth and round by friction. Who among us would wish to suspend a law of nature whose effects on the whole are good? I glory in that which at the present day is so much spoken against—sectarianism, for "sectarianism" is the cant phrase which our enemies use for all firm religious belief. I find it applied to all sorts of Christians; no matter what views he may hold, if a man be but earnest, he is a sectarian at once. Success to sectarianism, let it live and flourish. When that is done with, farewell to the power of godliness. When we cease, each of us, to maintain our own views of truth, and to maintain those views firmly and strenuously, then truth shall fly out of hand, and error alone shall reign: this, indeed, is the object of our foes: under the cover of attacking sects, they attack true religion, and would drive it, if they could, from off the face of the earth. In the controversy which has raged,—a controversy which, I again say, I believe to have been really healthy, and which has done us all a vast amount of good— mistakes have arisen from two reasons. Some brethren have altogether forgotten one order of truths, and then, in the next place, they have gone too far with others. We all have one blind eye, and too often we are like Nelson in the battle, we put the telescope to that blind eye, and then protest that we cannot see. I have heard of one man who said he had read the Bible through thirty-four times on his knees, but could not see a word about election in it; I think it very likely that he could not; kneeling is a very uncomfortable posture for reading, and possibly the superstition which would make the poor man perform this penance would disqualify him for using his reason: moreover, to get through the Book thirty-four times, he probably read in such a hurry that he did not know what he was reading, and might as well have been dreaming over "Robinson Crusoe" as the Bible. He put the telescope to the blind eye. Many of us do that; we do not want to see a truth, and therefore

we say we cannot see it. On the other hand, there are others who push a truth too far. "This is good; oh! this is precious!" say they, and then they think it is good for everything; that in fact it is the only truth in the world. You know how often things are injured by over-praise; how a good medicine, which really was a great boon for a certain disease, comes to be despised utterly by the physician, because a certain quack has praised it up as being a universal cure; so puffery in doctrine leads to dishonor. Truth has thus suffered on all sides; on the one hand brethren would not see the truth, and on the other hand they magnified out of proportion that which they did see. You have seen those mirrors, those globes that are sometimes hung in gardens; you walk up to them and you see your head ten times as large as your body, or you walk away and put yourself in another position, a then your feet are monstrous and the rest of your body is small; this is an ingenious toy, but I am sorry to say that many go to work with God's truth upon the model of this toy; they magnify one capital truth till it becomes monstrous; they minify and speak little of another truth till it becomes altogether forgotten. In what I shall be able say this morning you will probably detect the failing to which I allude, the common fault of humanity, and suspect that I also am magnifying one truth at the expense of another; but I will say this, before I proceed further, that it shall not be the case if I can help it, but I will endeavor honestly to bring out the truth as I have learned it, and if in ought ye see that I teach you what is contrary to the Word of God, reject it; but mark you, if it be according to God's Word, reject it at your peril; for when I have once delivered it to you, if ye receive it not the responsibility lies with you.

There are two things, then, this morning I shall have to talk about. The first is, *that the work of salvation rests upon the will of God, and not upon the will of man*; and secondly, the equally sure doctrine, that *the will of man has its proper position in the work of salvation, and is not to be ignored*.

I. First, then, SALVATION HINGES UPON THE WILL OF GOD AND NOT UPON THE WILL OF MAN. So saith out text—"It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" by which is clearly meant that the reason why any man is saved is not because *he* wills it, but because *God* willed, accord to that other passage, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." The whole scheme of salvation, we aver, from the first to the last, hinges and turns, and is dependent upon the absolute will of God, and not upon the will of the creature.

This, we think, we can show in two or three ways; and first, we think that *analogy furnishes us with a rather strong argument*. There is a certain likeness between all God's works; if a painter shall paint three pictures, there is a certain identity of style about all the three which leads you to know that they are from the same hand. Or, if an author shall write three works upon three different subjects, yet there are qualities running through the whole, which lead you to assert, "That is the same man's writing, I am certain, in the whole of the three books." Now what we find in the works of nature, we generally find to be correct with regard to the work of providence; and what is true of nature and of providence, is usually true with regard to the greater work of grace. Turn your thoughts, then, to the works of *creation*. There was a time when these works had no existence; the sun was not born; the young moon had not begun to fill her horns; the stars were not; not even the illimitable void of space was then in existence. God dwelt alone without a creature. I ask you, with whom did he then take counsel? Who instructed him? Who had a voice in the counsel by which the wisdom of God was directed? Did it not rest with his own will whether he would make or not? Was not creation itself, when it lay in embryo in his thoughts entirely, in his keeping, so that he would or would not just as he pleased? And when he willed to create, did he not still exercise his

own discretion and will as to what and how he would make? If he hath made the stars spheres, what reason was there for this but his own will? If he hath chosen that they should move in the circle rather than in any other orbit, is it not God's own fiat that hath made them do so? And when this round world, this green earth on which we dwell, leaped from his molding hand into its sunlit track, was not this also according to the divine will? Who ordained, save the Lord, that there the Himalayas should lift up their heads and pierce the clouds, and that there the deep cavernous recesses of the sea should pierce earth's bowels of rock? Who, save himself, ordained that yon Sahara should be brown and sterile, and that yonder isle should laugh in the midst of the sea with joy over her verdure? Who, I say, ordained this, save God? You see running through creation, from the tiniest animalcule up to the tall archangel who stands before the throne, this working of God's own will. Milton was nobly right when he represents the Eternal One as saying,

My goodness is most free

To act or not: Necessity and Chance

Approach not me, and what I will is fate.

He created as it pleased him; he made them as he chose; the potter exercised power over his clay to make his vessels as he willed, and to make them for what purposes he pleased. Think you that he has abdicated the throne of grace? Does he reign in creation and not in grace? Is he absolute king over nature and not over the greater works of the new nature? Is he Lord over the things which his hand made at first, and not King over the great regeneration, the new-making wherein he maketh all things new?

But take the works of *Providence*. I suppose there will be no dispute amongst us that in providential matters God ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will. If we should, however, be troubled with doubts about the matter, we might hear the striking words of Nebuchadnezzar when, taught by God, he had repented of his pride— "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; he doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou." From the first moment of human history even to the last, God's will shall be done. What though it be a catastrophe or a crime—there may be the second causes and the action of human evil, but the great first cause is in all. If we could imagine that one human action had eluded the prescience or the predestination of God, we could suppose that the whole might have done so, and all things might drift to sea, anchorless, rudderless, a sport to every wave, the victim of tempest and hurricane. One leak in the ship of Providence would sink her, one hour in which Omnipotence relaxed its grasp and she would fall to atoms. But it is the comfortable conviction of all God's people that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" and that God ruleth and overruleth, and reigneth in all acts of men and in all events that transpire; from seeming evil still producing good, and better still, and better still in infinite progression, still ordering all things according the counsel of his will. And think you that he reigns in Providence and is King there, and not in grace? Has he given up the blood-bought land to be ruled by man, while common Providence is left as a lonely providence to be his only heritage? He hath not let slip the reins of the great chariot of Providence, and think you that when Christ goeth forth in the chariot of his grace it is with steeds unguided, or driven only by chance, or by the fickle will of man? Oh, no brethren. As surely as God's will is the axle of the universe, as certainly as God's will is the great heart of providence sending its pulsings through even the most distant limbs of human act, so in grace let us rest assured that he is King, willing to do as he pleases, having mercy on whom he will have mercy, calling whom he chooses

to call, quickening whom he wills, and fulfilling, despite man's hardness of heart, despite man's willful rejection of Christ, his own purposes, his won decrees, without one of them falling to the ground. We think, then, that analogy helps to strengthen us in the declaration of the text, that salvation is not left with man's will.

2. But, secondly, *we believe that the difficulties which surround the opposite theory are tremendous. In fact, we cannot bear to look them in the face.* If there be difficulties about ours, there are ten times more about the opposite. We think that the difficulties which surround our belief that salvation depends upon the will of God, arise from our ignorance in not understanding enough of God to be able to judge of them; but that the difficulties in the other case do not arise from that cause, but from certain great truths, clearly revealed, which stand in manifest opposition to the figment which our opponents have espoused. According to their theory—that salvation depends upon our own will—you have first of all this difficulty to meet, *that you have made the purpose of God in the great plan of salvation entirely contingent.* You have put an "if" upon everything. Christ may die, but it is not certain according to that theory that he will redeem a great multitude; nay, not certain that he will redeem any, since the efficacy of the redemption according to that plan, rests not in its own intrinsic power, but in the will of man accepting that redemption. Hence if man be, as we aver he always is, if he be a bond-slave as to his will, and will not yield to the invitation of God's grace, then in such a case the atonement of Christ would be valueless, useless, and altogether in vain, for not a soul would be saved by it; and even when souls are saved by it, according to that theory, the efficacy, I say, lies not in the blood itself, but in the will of man which gives it efficacy. Redemption is therefore made contingent; the cross shakes, the blood falls powerless on the ground, and atonement is a matter of perhaps. There is a heaven provided, but there may no souls who will ever come there if their coming is to be of themselves. There is a fountain filled with blood, but there may be none who will ever wash in it unless divine purpose and power shall constrain them to come. You may look at any one promise of grace, but you cannot say over it, "This is the sure mercy of David;" for there is an "if," and a "but;" a "perhaps," and a "peradventure." In fact, the reigns are gone out of God's hands; the lynch-pin is taken away from the wheels of the creation; you have left the whole economy of grace and mercy to be the gathering together of fortuitous atoms impelled by man's own will, and what may become of it at the end nobody can know. We cannot tell on that theory whether God will be gloried or sin will triumph. Oh! how happy are we when come back to the old fashioned doctrines, and cast our anchor where it can get its grip in the eternal purpose and counsel of God, who worketh all things to the good pleasure of his will.

Then another difficulty comes in; not only is everything made contingent, but it does seem to us *as if man were thus made to be the supreme being in the universe.* According to the freewill scheme the Lord intends good, but he must win like a lackey on his own creature to know what his intention is; God willeth good and would do it, but he cannot, because he has an unwilling man who will not have God's good thing carried into effect. What do ye, sirs, but drag the Eternal from his throne, and lift up into it that fallen creature, man: for man, according to that theory nods, and his nod is destiny. You must have a destiny somewhere; it must either be as God wills or as man wills. If it be as God wills, then Jehovah sits as sovereign upon his throne of glory, and all hosts obey him, and the world is safe; if not God, then you put man there, to say, "I will" or "I will not; if I will it I will enter heaven; if I will it I will despise the grace of God; if I will it I will conquer the Holy Spirit, for I am stronger than God, and stronger than omnipotence; if I will it I will make the blood of Christ of no effect, for I am mightier than that blood, mightier than the blood of the

Son of God himself; though God make his purpose, yet will I laugh at his purpose; it shall be my purpose that shall make his purpose stand, or make it fall." Why, sirs, if this be not Atheism, it is idolatry; it is putting man where God should be, and I shrink with solemn awe and horror from that doctrine which makes the grandest of God's works—the salvation man—to be dependent upon the will of his creature whether it shall be accomplished or not. Glory I can and must in my text in its fullest sense. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

3. We think *that the known condition of man is a very strong argument against the supposition that salvation depends upon his own will*; and hence is a great confirmation of the truth that it depends upon the will of God; that it is God that chooses, and not man,—God who takes the first step, and not the creature. Sirs, on the theory that man comes to Christ of his own will, what do you with texts of Scripture which say that he is dead? "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins;" you will say that is a figure. I grant it, but what is the meaning of it? You say the meaning is, he is spiritually dead. Well, then I ask you, how can he perform the spiritual act of willing that which is right? He is alive enough to will that which is evil, only evil and that continually, but he is not alive to will that which is spiritually good. Do you not know, to turn to another Scripture, that he cannot even discern that which is spiritual? for the natural man knoweth not the things which be of God, seeing they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. Why, he has not a "spirit" with which to discern them; he has only a soul and body, but the third principle, implanted in regeneration, which is called in the Word of God, "the spirit," he knows nothing of and he is therefore incapable, seeing he is dead and is without the vitalizing spirit, of doing what you say he does. Then again, what make you of the words of our Saviour where he said to those who had heard even him, "Ye *will not* come to me that ye might have life?" Where is free-will after such a text as that? When Christ affirms that they will not, who dare say they will? "Ah, but," you say, "they could if they would." Dear sir, I am not talking about that; I am talking about if they would, the question is "*will they?*" and we say "no," they never will by nature. Man is so depraved, so set on mischief, and the way of salvation is so obnoxious to his pride, so hateful to his lusts, that he cannot like it, and will not like it, unless he who ordained the plan shall change his nature, and subdue his will. Mark, this stubborn will of man is his sin; he is not to be excused for it; he is guilty because he will not come; he is condemned because he will not come; because he will not believe in Christ, therefore is condemnation resting upon him, but still the fact does not alter for all that, that he will not come by nature if left to himself. Well, then, if man will not, how shall he be saved unless God shall make him will?—unless, in some mysterious way, he who made heart shall touch its mainspring so that it shall move in a direction opposite to that which it naturally follows.

4. But there is another argument which will come closer home to us. *It is consistent with the universal experience of all God's people that salvation is of God's will*. You will say, "I have not had a very long life, I have not, but I have had a very extensive acquaintance with all sections of the Christian Church, and I solemnly protest before you, that I have never yet met with a man professing to be a Christian, let alone his really being so, who ever said that his coming to God was the result of his unassisted nature. Universally, I believe, without exception, the people of God will say it was the Holy Spirit that made them what they are; that they should have refused to come as others do unless God's grace had sweetly influenced their wills. There are some hymns in Mr. Wesley's hymn-book which are stronger upon this point than I could ever venture to be, for he puts prayer into the lips of the sinner in which God is even asked to force him to be saved by grace. Of course I can take no objection to a term so strong, but it goes to prove this, that among all sections

of Christians, whether Arminian or Calvinistic, whatever their doctrinal sentiments may be, their experimental sentiments are the same. I do not think they would any of them refuse to join in the verse—

Oh! yes, I do love Jesus,
 Because he first loved me.
 Nor would they find fault with our own hymn,
 'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
 That sweetly forced us in;
 Else we had still refused to taste,
 And perished in our sin.

We bring out the crown and say, "On whose head shall we put it? Who ruled at the turning-point? Who decided this case?" and the universal Church of God, throwing away their creeds, would say. "Crown *him*; crown *him*, put it on *his* head, for *he* is worthy; *he* has made us to differ; *he* has done it, and unto *him* be the praise for ever and ever." What staggers me is, that men can believe dogmas contrary to their own experience,—that they can hug that to their hearts as precious to which their own inward convictions must give the lie.

5. But, lastly, in the way of argument. and to bring our great battering-ram at the last. It is not, after all, arguments from analogy, nor reasons from the difficulties of the opposite position, nor inferences from the know feebleness of human nature, nor even deductions from experience, that will settle this question once for all. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not accord to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Do me the pleasure, then, to use your Bibles for a moment or two, and let us see what Scripture saith on this main point. First, with regard to the matter of God's preparation, and his plan with regard to salvation. We turn to the apostle's words in the epistle to the Ephesians, and we find in the first chapter and the third verse, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will"—a double word you notice—it is according to the will of his will. No expression could be stronger in the original to show the entire absoluteness of this thing as depending on the will God. It seems, then, that the choice of his people their adoption is according to his will. So far we are satisfied, indeed, with the testimony of the apostle. Then in the ninth verse, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him." So, then, it seems that the grand result of the gathering together of all the saved in Christ, as well as the primitive purpose, is according to the counsel of his will. What stronger proof can there be that salvation depends upon the will of God? Moreover, it says in the eleventh verse—"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:" a stronger expression than "of his will"—"of his own will," his free unbiased will, his will alone. As for redemption as well as for the eternal purpose—redemption is according to the will of God. You remember that verse in Hebrews, tenth chapter, ninth verse: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he might establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified." So that the redemption offered up on Calvary, like the election made before the foundation of the world, is the

result of the divine will. There will be little controversy here: the main point is about our new birth, and here we cannot allow of any diversity of opinion. Turn to the Gospel according to John, the first chapter and thirteenth verse. It is utterly impossible that human language could have put a stronger negative on the vainglorious claims of the human will than this passage does: "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." A passage equally clear is to be found in the Epistle of James, at the first chapter, and the eighteenth verse: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." In these passages—and they are not the only ones—the new birth is peremptorily and in the strongest language put down as being the fruit and effect of the will and purpose of God. As to the sanctification which is the result and outgrowth of the new birth, that also is according to God's holy will. In the first of Thessalonians, fourteenth chapter, and third verse, we have, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." One more passage I shall need you to refer to, the sixteenth chapter, and thirty-ninth verse. Here we find that the preservation, the perseverance, the resurrection, and the eternal glory of God's people, rests upon his will. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day; and this is the will of him that sent me that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." And indeed this is why the saints go to heaven at all, because in the seventeenth chapter of John, Christ is recorded as praying, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." We close, then, by noticing that according to Scripture there is not a single blessing in the new covenant which is not conferred upon us according to the will of God, and that as the vessel hangs upon the nail, so every blessing, we receive hangs upon the absolute will and counsel of God, who gives these mercies even as he gives the gifts of the Spirit according as he wills. We shall now leave that point, and take the second great truth, and speak a little while upon it.

II. MAN'S WILL HAS ITS PROPER PLACE IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION. "*Whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely.*" According to this and many other texts the Scripture where man is addressed as a being having a will, it appears clear enough that men are not saved by compulsion. When a man receives the grace of Christ, he does not receive it against his will. No man shall be pardoned while he abhors the thought forgiveness. No man shall have joy in the Lord if he says, "I do not wish to rejoice in the Lord." Do not think that anybody shall have the angels pushing them behind into the gates of heaven. They must go there freely or else they will never go there at all. We are not saved against our will; nor again, mark you, is the will taken away; for God does not come and convert the intelligent free-agent into a machine. When he turns the slave into a child, it is not by plucking out of him the will which he possesses. We are as free under grace as ever we were under sin; nay, we were slaves when we were under sin, and when the Son makes us free we are free indeed, and we are never free before. Erskine, in speaking of his own conversion, says he ran to Christ "with full consent against his will," by which he meant it was against his old will; against his will as it was till Christ came, but when Christ came, then he came to Christ with full consent, and was as willing to be saved—no, that is a cold word—as delighted, as pleased, as transported to receive Christ as if grace had not constrained him. But we do hold and teach that though the will of man is not ignored, and men are not saved against their wills, that the work of the Spirit, which is the effect of the will of God, is to change the human will, and so make men willing in the day of God's power, working in them to will to do of his own good pleasure. The work of the Spirit is consistent with the original laws and constitution of human nature. Ignorant

men talk grossly and carnally about the work of the Spirit in the heart as if the heart were a lump of flesh, and the Holy Spirit turned it round mechanically. Now, brethren, how is your heart and my heart changed in any matter? Why, the instrument generally is persuasion. A friend sets before us a truth we did not know before; pleads with us; puts it in a new light, and then we say, "Now I see that," and then our hearts are changed towards the thing. Now, although no man's heart is changed by moral suasion in itself, yet the way in which the Spirit works in his heart, as far as we can detect it, is instrumentally by a blessed persuasion of the mind. I say not that men are saved by moral suasion, or that this is the first cause, but I think it is frequently the visible means. As to the secret work, who knows how the Spirit works? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit;" but yet, as far as we can see, the Spirit makes a revelation of truth to the soul, whereby it seeth things in a different light from what it ever did before, and then the will cheerfully bows that neck which once was stiff as iron, and wears the yoke which once it despised, and wears it gladly, cheerfully, and joyfully. Yet, mark, the will is not gone; the will is treated as it should be treated; man is not acted upon as a machine, he is not polished like a piece of marble; he is not planed and smoothed like a plank of deal; but his mind is acted upon by the Spirit of God, in a manner quite consistent with mental laws. Man is thus made a new creature in Christ Jesus, by the will of God, and his own will is blessedly and sweetly made to yield.

Then, mark you,—and this is a point which I want to put into the thoughts of any who are troubled about these things,—this gives the renewed soul a most blessed sign of grace, insomuch that if any man wills to be saved by Christ, if he wills to have sin forgiven through the precious blood, if he wills to live by a holy life resting upon the atonement of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit, that will is one of the most blessed signs of the mysterious working of the Spirit of God in his heart; such a sign is it that if it be real willingness, I will venture to assert that that man is not far from the kingdom. I say not that he is so saved that he himself may conclude he is, but there is a work begun, which has the germ of salvation in it. If thou art willing, depend upon it that God is willing. Soul, if thou art anxious after Christ, he is more anxious after thee. If thou hast only one spark of true desire after him, that spark is a spark from the fire of his love to thee. He has drawn thee, or else thou wouldest never run after him. If you are saying, "Come to me, Jesus," it is because he has come to you, though you do not know it. He has sought you as a lost sheep, and therefore you have sought him like a returning prodigal. He has swept the house to find you, as the woman swept for the lost piece of money, and now you seek him as a lost child would seek a father's face. Let your willingness to come to Christ be a hopeful sign and symptom.

But once more, and let me have the ear of the anxious yet again. It appears that when you have a willingness to come to Christ, there is a special promise for you. You know, my dear hearers, that we are not accustomed in this house of prayer to preach one side of truth, but we try if we can to preach it all. There are some brethren with small heads, who, when they have heard a strong doctrinal sermon, grow into hyper-Calvinists, and then when we preach an inviting sermon to poor sinners, they cannot understand it, and say it is a yea and nay gospel. Believe me, it is not yea and nay, but yea and yea. We give your yea to all truth, and our nay we give to no doctrine of God. Can a sinner be saved when he wills to come to Christ? *Yea*. And if he does come, does he come because God brings him? *Yea*. We have no nays in our theology for any revealed truth. We do not shut the door on one word and open it to another. Those are the yea and nay people who have a nay for the poor sinner, when they profess to preach the gospel. As soon as a man has any willingness given

to him, he has a special promise. Before he had the willingness he had an invitation. Before he had any willingness, it was his duty to believe in Christ, for it is not man's condition that gives him a right to believe. Men are to believe in obedience to God's command. God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and this is his great command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "This is the commandment, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom he has sent." Hence your right and your duty to believe; but once you have got the willingness, then you have a special promise—"Whosoever will let him come." That is a sort of extraordinary invitation. Methinks this is the utterance of the special call. You know how John Bunyan describes the special call in words to this effect. "The hen goes clucking about the farm-yard all day long; that is the general call of the gospel; but she sees a hawk up in the sky, and she gives a sharp cry for her little ones to come and hide under her wings; that is the special call; they come and are safe." My text is a special call to some of you. Poor soul! are you willing to be saved? "O, sir, willing, willing indeed; I cannot use that word; I would give all I have if I might but be saved." Do you mean you would give it all in order to purchase it? "Oh no, sir, I do not mean that; I know I cannot purchase it; I know it is God's gift, but still, if I could be but saved, I would ask nothing else.

Lord, deny me what thou wilt,
 Only ease me of my guilt;
 Suppliant at thy feet I lie,
 Give me Christ, or else I die.

Why, then the Lord speaks to you this morning, to you if not to any other man in the chapel, he speaks to you and says—"Whosoever will let him come." You cannot say this does not mean you. When we give the general invitation, you may exempt yourself perhaps in some way or other, but you cannot now. You are willing, then come and take the water of life freely. "Had not I better pray?" It does not say so; it says, take the water of life. "But had not I better go home and get better?" No, take the water of life, and take the water of life now. You are standing by the fountain outside there, and the water is flowing and you are willing to drink; you are picked out of a crowd who are standing round about, and you are specially invited by the person who built the fountain. He says, "Here is a special invitation for you; you are willing; come and drink." "Sir," you say, "I must go home and wash my pitcher." "No," says he, "come and drink." "But, sir, I want to go home and write a petition to you." "I do not want it," he says, "drink now, drink now." What would you do? If you were dying of thirst, you would just put your lips down and drink. Soul, do that now. Believe that Jesus Christ is able to save thee now. Trust thy soul in his hands now. No preparation is wanted. Whosoever will let him come; let him come at once and take the water of life freely. To take that water is simply to trust Christ; to repose on him; to take him to be your all in all. Oh that thou wouldest do it now! Thou are willing; God has made thee willing. When the crusaders heard the voice of Peter the hermit, as he bade them go to Jerusalem to take it from the hands of the invaders, they cried out at once, "*Deus vult*; God wills it; God wills it;" and every man plucked his sword from its scabbard, and set out to reach the holy sepulchre, for God willed it. So come and drink, sinner; God wills it. Trust Jesus; God wills it. If you will it, that is the sign that God wills it. "Father, thy will be done on earth even as it is in heaven." As sinners, humbly stoop to drink from the flowing crystal which streams from the sacred fountain which Jesus opened for his people; let it be said in heaven, "God's will is done; hallelujah, hallelujah!" "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" yet "Whosoever will let him come and take the water of life freely."

The Old, Old Story

A Sermon

(No. 446)

Delivered on Sunday Evening, March 30th, 1862, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"In due time Christ died for the ungodly."—Romans 5:6.

There is a doctor of divinity here to-night who listened to me some years ago. He has been back to his own dwelling-place in America, and he has come here again. I could not help fancying, as I saw his face just now, that he would think I was doting on the old subject, and harping on the old strain; that I had not advanced a single inch upon any new domain of thought, but was preaching the same old gospel in the same old terms as ever. If he should think so he will be quite right. I suppose I am something like Mr. Cecil when he was a boy. His father once told him to wait in a gateway till he came back, and the father, being very busy, went about the city; and amidst his numerous cares and engagements, he forgot the boy. Night came on, and at last when the father reached home, there was great enquiry as to where Richard was. The father said, "Dear me, I left him early in the morning standing under such-and-such a gateway, and I told him to stay there until I came for him; I should not wonder but what he is there now." So they went, and there they found him. Such an example of childish simple faithfulness it is no disgrace to emulate. I received some years ago orders from my Master to stand at the foot of the cross until he came. He has not come yet, but I mean to stand there till he does. If I should disobey his orders and leave those simple truths which have been the means of the conversion of souls, I know not how I could expect his blessing. Here, then, I stand at the foot of the cross and tell out the old, old story, stale though it sound to itching ears, and worn threadbare as critics may deem it. It is of Christ I love to speak—of Christ who loved, and lived, and died, the substitute for sinners, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

It is somewhat singular, but just as they say fish go bad at the head first, so modern divines generally go bad first upon the head and main doctrine of the substitutionary work of Christ. Nearly all our modern errors, I might say all of them, begin with mistakes about Christ. Men do not like to be always preaching the same thing., There are Athenians in the pulpit as well as in the pew who spend their time in nothing but hearing some new thing. They are not content to tell over and over again the simple message, "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." So they borrow novelties from literature, and garnish the Word of God with the words which man's wisdom teacheth. The doctrine of atonement they mystify. Reconciliation by the precious blood of Jesus ceases to be the corner-stone of their ministry. To shape the gospel to the diseased wishes and tastes of men enters far more deeply into their purpose, than to re-mould the mind and renew the heart of men that they receive the gospel as it is. There is no telling where they will go who once go back from following the Lord with a true and undivided heart, from deep to deep descending, the blackness of darkness will receive them unless grace prevent. Only this you may take for a certainty.

"They cannot be right in the rest,
Unless they speak rightly of Him."

If they are not sound about the purpose of the cross, they are rotten everywhere. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." On this rock there is security. We may be mistaken on any other points with more impunity than this. They who are builded on the rock, though they build wood, and hay, and stubble, thereupon to their sore confusion, for what they build shall be burned, themselves shall be saved yet so as by fire. Now that grand doctrine which we take to be the keystone of the evangelical system, they very corner-stone of the gospel, that grand doctrine of the atonement of Christ we would tell to you again, and then, without attempting to prove it, for that we have done hundreds of times, we shall try to draw some lessons of instruction from that truth which is surely believed among us. Man having sinned, God's righteousness demanded that the penalty should be fulfilled. He had said, "The soul that sinneth shall die;" and unless God can be false, the sinner must die. Moreover, God's holiness demanded it, for the penalty was based on justice. It was just that the sinner should die. God had not appended a more heavy penalty than he should have done. Punishment is the just result of offending. God, then, must either cease to be holy, or the sinner must be punished. Truth and holiness imperiously demanded that God should lift his hand and smite the man who had broken his law and offended his majesty. Christ Jesus, the second Adam, the federal head of the chosen ones, interposed. He offered himself to bear the penalty which they ought to bear; to fulfil and honour the law which they had broken and dishonoured. He offered to be their day's-man, a surety, a substitute, standing in their room, place, and stead. Christ became the vicar of his people; vicariously suffering in their stead; vicariously doing in their stead that which they were not strong enough to do by reason of the weakness of the flesh through the fall. This which Christ proposed to do was accepted of God. In due time Christ actually died, and fulfilled what he promised to do. He took every sin of all his people, and suffered every stroke of the rod on account of those sins. He had compounded into one awful draught the punishment of the sins of all the elect. He took the cup; he put it to his lips; he sweat as it were great drops of blood while he tasted the first sip thereof, but he never desisted, but drank on, on, on, till he had exhausted the very dregs, and turning the vessel upside down he said, "It is finished!" and at one tremendous draught of love the Lord God of salvation had drained destruction dry. Not a dreg, not the slightest residue was left; he had suffered all that ought to have been suffered; had finished transgression, and made an end of sin. Moreover, he obeyed his Father's law to the utmost extent of it; he fulfilled that will of which he had said of old—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God: thy law is my delight;" and having offered both an atonement for sin and a complete fulfilment of the law, he ascended up on high, took his seat on the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool, and interceding for those whom he bought with blood that they may be with him where he is. The doctrine of the atonement is very simple. It just consists in the substitution of Christ in the place of the sinner; Christ being treated as of he were the sinner, and then the transgressors being treated as if he were the righteous one. It is a change of persons; Christ becomes sinner; he stands in the sinner's place and stead; he was numbered with the transgressors; the sinner becomes righteous; he stands in Christ's place and stead, and is numbered with the righteous ones. Christ has no sin of his own, but he takes human guilt, and is punished for human folly. We have no righteousness of our own, but we take the divine righteousness; we are rewarded for it, and stand accepted before God as though that righteousness had been wrought out by ourselves. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," that he might take away their sins.

It is not my present object to prove this doctrine. As I said before, there is no need to be always arguing what we know to be true. Rather let us say a few earnest words by way of *commending this doctrine of the atonement*; and afterwards I shall propound it *by way of application to those who as yet have not received Christ*.

I. First, then, BY WAY OF COMMENDATION.

There are some things to be said for the gospel which proclaims the atonement as its fundamental principle. And the first thing to be said of it is, that in comparison with all modern schemes *how simple it is!* Brethren, this is why our great gentlemen do not like it, it is too plain. If you will go and purchase certain books which teach you how sermons ought to be made, you will find that the English of it is this,—pick all the hard words you can out of all the books you read in the week, and then pour them out on your people on Sunday; and there is a certain set of people who always applaud the man they cannot understand. They are like the old woman who was asked when she came home from Church, "Did you understand the sermon?" "No;" she answered, "I would not have the presumption;" she thought it would be presumption to attempt to understand the minister. But the Word of God is understood with the heart, and makes no strange demands on the intellect.

Now, our first commendation on the doctrine of the atonement is, that it commends itself *to the understanding*. The way-faring man, though his intellect be but one grade beyond an idiot, may get a hold on the truth of substitution without any difficulty. Oh, these modern theologians, they will do anything to spirit away the cross! They hang over it the gaudy trappings of their elocution, or they introduce it with the dark mysterious incantations of their logic, and then the poor troubled heart looks up to see the cross and sees nothing there but human wisdom. Now I say it again, there is not one of you here but can understand this truth, that Christ died in the stead of his people. If you perish, it will not be because the gospel was beyond your comprehension. If you go down to hell, it will not be because you were not able to understand how God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. It is astonishing in this age how little is known of the simple truisms of the Bible; it seems to be always admonishing us how simple we ought to be in setting them forth. I have heard that when Mr. Kilpin was once preaching a very good and earnest sermon, he used the word "Deity," and a sailor sitting down below leaned forward and said, "Beg your pardon, sir, but who's he, pray? Do you mean God Almighty?" "Yes," said Mr. Kilpin, "I do mean God, and I ought not to have used a word which you could not understand." "I thank you sir," said the sailor, and looked as if he would devour the rest of the sermon in the interest which he felt in it even to the close. Now that one unvarnished face is but an index of that which prevails in every land. There must be simple preaching. A doctrine of atonement that is not simple, a doctrine which comes from Germany, which needs a man to be a great scholar before he can comprehend it himself, and to be a still greater adept before he can tell it to other—such a doctrine is manifestly not of God, because it is not suited to God's creatures. It is fascinating to one in a thousand of them, but it is not suited to those poor of this world who are rich in faith; not suited to those babes to whom God has revealed the things of the kingdom while he has hidden them from the wise and prudent. Oh, you may always judge of a doctrine in this way. If it is not a simple doctrine, it does not come from God; if it puzzles you, if it is one which you cannot see through at once because of the mysterious language in which it is couched, you may begin to suspect that it is man's doctrine, and not the Word of God.

Nor is this doctrine of the atonement to be commended merely for its simplicity, but because while suiting the understand it also *suits the conscience*. How it satisfies the conscience no tongue can tell! When a man is awakened and his conscience stings him, when the Spirit of God has shown

him his sin and his guilt, there is nothing but the blood of Christ that can ever give him peace. Peter might have stood up at the prow of the boat and have said to the winds and to the waves, "Peace, be still," but they would have gone on to roaring with unabated fury. The Pope of Rome, who pretends to be Peter's successor, may stand up with his ceremonies and say to the troubled conscience, "Peace, be still," but it will not cease its terrible agitations. The unclean spirit that sets conscience in so much turmoil cries out, "Jesus I know, and his cross I know, but who are ye?" Yea, and it will not be case out. There is no chance whatever of our finding a pillow for a head which the Holy Ghost, has made to ache save in the atonement and the finished work of Christ. When Mr. Robert Hall first went to Cambridge to preach, the Cambridge folks were nearly Unitarians. So he preached upon the doctrine of the finished work of Christ, and some of them came to him in the vestry and said, "Mr Hall, this will never do." "Why not?" said he, "Why, your sermon was only fit for old women." "And why only fit for old women?" said Mr. Hall. "Because," said they, "they are tottering on the borders of the grave, and they want comfort, and, therefore, it will suit them, but it will not do for us." "Very well," said Mr. Hall, "you have unconsciously paid me all the compliment that I can ask for; if this is good for old women on the borders of the grave, it must be good for you if you are in your right senses, for the borders of the grave is where we all stand." Here, indeed, is a choice feature of the atonement, it is comforting to us in the thought of death. When conscience is awakened to a sense of guilt, death is sure to cast his pale shadow on all our prospects, and encircle all our steps with dark omens of the grave. Conscience is accompanied generally in its alarms with the thoughts of the near-approaching judgment, but the peace which the blood gives is conscience-proof, sickness-proof, death-proof, devil-proof, judgment-proof, and it will be eternity-proof. We may well be alarmed at all the uprisings of occupation and all the remembrance of past defilement, but only let our eyes rest on they dear cross, O Jesus, and our conscience has peace with God, and we rest and are still. Now we ask whether any of these modern systems of divinity can quiet a troubled conscience? We would like to give them some cases that we meet with sometimes—some despairing ones—and say, "Now, here, cast this devil out if you can try your hand at it," and I think they would find, that this kind goeth not out save by the tears, and groans, and death of Jesus Christ the atoning sacrifice. A gospel without an atonement may do very well for young ladies and gentlemen who do not know that they ever did anything wrong. It will just suit your lackadaisical people who have not got a heart for anybody to see; who have always been quite moral, upright, and respectable; who feel insulted if you told them they deserved to be sent to hell; who would not for a moment allow that they could be depraved or fallen creatures. The gospel, I say, of these moderns will suit these gentlefolks very well I dare say, but let a man be really guilty and know it; let him be really awake to his lost state, and I aver that none but Jesus—none but Jesus, nothing but the precious blood can give him peace and rest. For these two things, then, commend us to the doctrine of the atonement, because it suits the understanding of the mostly lowly, and will quiet the conscience of the most troubled.

It has, moreover, this peculiar excellency, that *it softens the heart*. There is a mysterious softening and melting power in the story of the sacrifice of Christ. I know a dear Christian woman who loved her little ones and sought their salvation. When she prayed for them, she thought it right to use the best means she could to arrest their attention and awaken their minds. I hope you all do likewise. The means, however, which she thought best calculated for her object was the terrors of the Lord. She used to read to her children chapter after chapter of *Alleine's Alarm to the Unconverted*. Oh, that book! how many dreams it gave her boy at night about the devouring flames and the everlasting

burnings. But the boy's heart grew hardened, as if it were annealed rather than melted by the furnace of fear. The hammer welded the heart to sin, but did not break it. But even then, when the lad's heart was hard, when he heard of Jesus's love to his people, though he feared he was not one of them, still it used to make him weep to think Jesus should love anybody after such a sort. Even now that he has come to manhood, law and terrors make him dead and stolid, but thy blood, Jesus, thine agonies, in Gethsemane and on the tree, he cannot bear; they melt him; his soul flows through his eyes in tears; he weeps himself away from grateful love to thee for what thou hast done. Alas for those that deny the atonement! They take the very sting out of Christ's sufferings; and then, in taking out the sting, they take out the point with which sufferings of Christ pierce, and probe, and penetrate the heart. It is because Christ suffered for my sin, because he was condemned that I might be acquitted and not be damned as the result of my guilt: it is this that makes his sufferings such a cordial to my heart.

"See on the bloody tree,
The Illustrious sufferer hangs,
The torments due to thee,
He bore the dreadful pangs;
And cancelled there, the might sum,
Sins present, past, and sins to come."

At this present hour there are congregations met in the theatres of London, and there are persons addressing them. I do not know what their subjects are, but I know what they ought to be. If they want to get at the intellects of those who live in the back-slums, if they want to get at the consciences of those who have been thieves and drunkards, if they want to melt the hearts of those who have grown stubborn and callous through years of lust and iniquity, I know there is nothing will do it but the death on Calvary, the five wounds, the bleeding side, the vinegar, the nails, and the spear. There is a melting power here which is not to be found in all the world besides.

I will detain you yet once more on this point. We commend the doctrine of the atonement because, besides suiting the understanding, quieting the conscience, and melting the heart, we know there is a power in it to *affect the outward life*. No man can believe that Christ suffered for his sins and yet live in sin. No man can believe that his iniquities were the murderers of Christ, and yet go and hug those murderers to his bosom. The sure and certain effect of a true faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ is the purging out of the old leaven, the dedication of the soul to him who bought it with his blood, and the vowing to have revenge against those sins which nailed Jesus to the tree. The proof, after all, is the trial. Go into any parish in England where there lives a philosophical divine who has cut the atonement out of his preaching, and if you do not find more harlots, and thieves, and drunkards there than is usual, write me down mistaken; but go, on the other hand, into a parish where the atonement is preached, and that with rigid integrity and with loving earnestness, and if you do not find the ale-houses getting empty, and the shops shut on the Sunday, and the people walking in honesty and uprightness, then I have looked about the world in vain. I knew a village once that was perhaps one of the worst villages in England for many things; where many an illicit still was yielding its noxious liquor to a manufacturer without payment of the duty to the Government, and where, in connection with that, all manner of riot and iniquity were rife. There went a lad into that village, and but a lad, and one who had no scholarship, but was rough, and sometimes vulgar. He began to preach there, and it pleased God to turn that village upside down, and in a short time the little thatched chapel was crammed, and the biggest vagabonds of the village

were weeping floods of tears, and those who had been the curse of the parish became its blessings; and where there had been robberies and villainies of every kind all round the neighbourhood, there were none, because the men who did the mischief were themselves in the house of God, rejoicing to hear of Jesus crucified. Mark me, I am not telling you an exaggerated story now, nor a thing that I do not know. Yet this one thing I remember to the praise of God's grace, it pleased the Lord to work signs and wonders in our midst. He showed the power of Jesus' name, and made us witnesses of the gospel which can win souls, draw reluctant hearts, and mould the life and conduct of men afresh. Why, there are some brethren here who go to the refuges and homes to talk to those poor fallen girls who have been reclaimed. I wonder what they would do if they had not the gospel tale to carry with them to the abodes of wretchedness and shame. If they should take a leaf out of some divinity essays, and should go and talk to them in high-flowing words, and philosophies, what good would it be to them? Well, what is not good to them is not good to us. We want something we can grasp, something we can rely upon, something we can feel; something that will mould our character and conversation, and make us to be like Christ.

II. Secondly, one or two points BY WAY OF EXHORTATION.

Christian man, you believe that your sins are forgiven, and that Christ has made a full atonement for them. What shall we say to you? To you first we say, what a joyful Christian *you ought to be!* How you should live above the common trials and troubles of the world! Since sin is forgiven, what matters what happens to you now? Luther said, "Smite, Lord, smite, for my sin is forgiven. If thou hast but forgiven me, smite as hard as thou wilt;" as if he felt like a child who had done wrong, and cared not how his father might whip him if he would but forgive him. So I think you can say, "Send sickness, poverty, losses, crosses, slander, persecution, what thou wilt, thou hast forgiven me, and my soul is glad, and my spirit is rejoiced." And then, Christian, if thou art thus saved, and Christ really did take thy sin, whilst thou art glad, *be grateful and be loving*. Cling to that cross which took thy sin away; serve thou him who served thee. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Let not your zeal bubble over with some little ebullition of song. You may say,

"I love my God with zeal so great, that I could give him all,"

but sing it not in words unless thou dost mean it. Oh, do mean it! Is there nothing in your life that you do because you belong to Christ? Are you never anxious to show your love in some expressive tokens? Love the brethren of him who loved thee. If there be a Mephibosheth anywhere who is lame or halt, help him for Jonathan's sake. If there be a poor tired believer, try and weep with him, and bear his cross for the sake of him who wept for thee and carried thy sins.

And yet, again, Christian, if this be true that there is an atonement made for sin, *tell it, tell it, tell it*. "We cannot all preach," say you; no, but tell it, tell it. "I would not prepare a sermon;" tell it; tell out the story; tell out the mystery and wonder of Christ's love. "But I should never get a congregation;" tell it in your house; tell it by the fire-side. "But I have none but little children:" tell it to your children, and let them know the sweet mystery on the cross, and the blessed history of him who lived and died for sinners. Tell it, for you know not into what ears you may speak. Tell it often, for thus you will have the better hope that you may turn sinners to Christ. Lacking talent, lacking the graces of oratory, be glad that you lack these, and glory in your infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon you, but do tell it. Sometimes there are some of our young men get preaching who had better hold their tongues, but there are many others who have gifts and abilities which

they might use for Christ, but who seem tongue-tied. I have often said that if you get a young man to join a rifle corps, he has got something to do, and he puts his heart in it; but if you get the same young man to join a church, well, his name is in the book, and he has been baptized, and so on, and he thinks he has nothing more to do with it. Why, brethren, I do not like to have member of the church who feel they can throw the responsibility on a few of us while they themselves sit still. That is not the way to win battles. If at Waterloo some nine out of ten of our soldiers had said, "Well, we need not fight; we will leave the fighting to the few, there they are; let them go and do it all." Why, if they had said that, they would very soon have all been cut in pieces. They must every one of them take their turns, home, and foot, and artillery; men who were light-armed, and men of all kinds; they must march to the fray; yes, and even the guards, if they are held back as a reserve to the last, yet they must be called for,—"Up guards, and at 'em;" and if there are any of you here that are old men and women and think you are like the guards, and ought to be spared the heavy conflict, yet up and at them, for now the world needs you all, and since Christ has bought you with His blood, I beseech you be not content till you have fought for him, and have been victorious through His name. Tell it; tell it' tell it; with a voice of thunder tell it; year, with many voices mingling together as the sound of many waters; tell it till the dwellers in the remotest wilderness shall hear the sound thereof. Tell it there shall be ne'er a cot upon the mountain where it is not known, ne'er a ship upon the sea where the story has not been told. Tell it till there is never a dark alley that has not been illuminated by its light, nor a loathsome den which has not been cleansed by its power. Tell out the story that Christ died for the ungodly.

With a few words of application to unbelievers I draw to a close. Unbeliever, If god cannot and will not forgive the sons of penitent men without Christ taking their punishment, rest assured he will surely bring you to judgment. If, when Christ, God's Son, had imputed sin laid on him, God smote him, how will he smite you who are his enemy, and who have your own sins upon your head? God seemed at Calvary, as it were, to take an oath—sinner, hear it!—he seemed, as it were, to take an oath and say. "By the blood of my Son I swear that sin must be punished," and if it is not punished in Christ for you, it will be punished in you for yourselves. Is Christ yours, sinner? Did he die for you? Do you trust him? If you do, he died for you. Do not way, "No, I do not?" Then remember that if you live and die without faith in Christ, for every idle word and for every ill act that you have done, stroke for stroke, and blow for blow, vengeance must chastise you.

Again, to another class of you, this word. If God has in Christ made an atonement and opened a way of salvation, what must be your guilt who try to open another way; who say, "I will be good and virtuous; I will attend to ceremonies; I will save myself?" Fool that thou art, thou hast insulted God in his tenderest point, for thou hast, in fact, trampled on the blood of Christ, and said, "I need it not." Oh, if the sinner who repents not be damned, with what accumulated terrors shall he be damned, who, in addition to his impenitence, heaps affronts upon the person of Christ by going about to establish his own righteousness. Leave it; leave your rags, you will never make a garment of them; leave the pilfered treasure of thine; it is a counterfeit; forsake it. I counsel thee to buy of Christ fine raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and fine gold that thou mayest be rich.

And consider this, one and all of you, oh my hearers! If Christ hath made atonement for the ungodly, then let, the question go round, let it go round the aisles and round the gallery, and let it echo in every heart, and let it be repeated by every lip,—"Why not for me?" And "Why not for me?" Hope, sinner, hope; he died for the ungodly. If it had said he died for the godly, there were no hope for thee. If it had been written that he died to save the good, the excellent, and the perfect,

then thou hast no chance. He died for the ungodly; thou art such an one; what reason has thou to conclude that he did not die for thee? Hark thee, man; this is what Christ said to thee, "Believe, and thou shall be save;" that is, trust, and thou shall be saved. Trust thy soul in the hands of him who carried they load upon the cross; thrust him now. He died for you; your faith is to us the evidence, and to you the proof that Christ bought you with his blood. Delay not; you need not even stay to go home to offer a prayer. Trust Christ with you soul now. You have nothing else to trust to; hang on him. You are going down; you are going down. The waves are gathering about you, and soon shall they swallow you up, and we shall hear your gurglings as you sink. See, he stretches out his hand. "Sinner," saith he, "I will bear thee up; though hell's fiery waves should dash against thee I will bear thee through them all, only trust me." What sayest thou, sinner? Wilt thou trust him? Oh, my soul, recollect the moment when first, I trusted in him! There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, but I hardly think that is greater joy than the joy of the repenting sinner when he first finds Christ. So simple and so easy it seemed to me when I came to know it. I had only to look and live, only to trust and be saved. Year after year had I been running about hither and thither to try and do what was done beforehand, to try and get ready for that which did not want any readiness. On, happy was that day when I ventured to step in by the open door of his mercy, to set at the table of grace ready spread, and to eat and drink, asking no question! Oh, soul, do the same! Take courage. Trust Christ, and if he cast thee away when thou has trusted him—my soul for thine as we meet at the bar of God, I will be pawn and pledge for thee at the last, great day if such thou needest; but he cannot and he will not cast out any that come to him by faith. May god now accept and bless us all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

The Stony Heart Removed

A Sermon

(No. 456)

Delivered on Sunday Evening, May 25th, 1862, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."—Ezekiel 36:26.

THE FALL of man was utter and entire. Some things when they have become dilapidated may be repaired; but the old house of mankind is so thoroughly decayed that it must be pulled down even to its foundation, and a new house must be erected. To attempt mere improvement is to anticipate a certain failure. Manhood is like an old garment that is rent and rotten; he that would mend it with new cloth doth but make the rent worse. Manhood is like one of the old skin bottles of the Orientals; he who would put the new wine into it shall find that the bottles will burst, and his wine will be lost. Old shoes and clouted might be good enough for Gibeonites; but we are so thoroughly outworn that we must be made new, or thrown upon the dunghill. It is a wonder of wonders that such a thing is possible. If a tree loses its branch, a new branch may spring out; if you cut into the bark and mark the letters of your name, in process of time the bark may heal its own wound, and the mark may be erased. But who could give a new heart to the tree? Who could put new sap into it? By what possibility could you change its inner structure? If the core were smitten with death, what power but the divine could ever restore it to life? If a man has injured his bones, the fractured parts soon send forth a healing liquid, and the bone is by-and-bye restored to its former strength, if a man hath youth on his side. But if a man's heart were rotten, how could that be cured? If the heart were a putrid ulcer, if the very vitals of the man were rotten, what human surgery, what marvellous medicine could touch a defect so radical as this? Well did our hymn say:

"Can aught beneath a power divine
The stubborn will subdue?
'Tis thine, eternal Spirit, thine,
To form the heart anew.
To chase the shades of death away
And bid the sinner live!
A beam of heaven, a vital ray,
'Tis thine alone to give."

But while such a thing would be impossible apart from God, it is certain that God can do it. Oh, how the Master delighteth to undertake impossibilities! To do what others can do were but like unto man; but to accomplish that which is impossible to the creature is a mighty and noble proof of the dignity of the Creator. He delighteth to undertake strange things; to bring light out of darkness; order out of confusion; to send life into the dead; to heal the leprosy; to work marvels of grace and mercy, and wisdom, and peace—these, I say, God delighteth to do; and so, while the thing is impossible to us, it is possible to him. And more, its impossibility to us commends it to him, and makes him the more willing to undertake it, that he may thus glorify his great name.

According to the Word of God, man's heart is by nature like a stone; but God, through his grace, removes the stony heart and gives a heart of flesh. It is this prodigy of love, this miracle of grace, which is to engage our attention to-night. I trust we shall speak now, not of something that has happened to others only, but of a great wonder which has been wrought in ourselves. I trust we shall talk experimentally, and hear personally, and feel that we have an interest in these splendid deeds of divine love.

Two things we shall talk of to-night. First, *the stony heart and its dangers*; secondly, *the heart of flesh and its privileges*.

I. Some few words upon THE STONY HEART AND ITS DANGERS. Why is the heart of man compared to a stone at all?

1. First, because, like a stone it is *cold*. Few persons like to be always treading upon cold stones in their houses, and hence we floor our habitations; and it is thought to be a part, of the hardship of the prisoner if he has nothing to sit down or rest upon but the cold, cold stone. You may heat a stone for a little season if you thrust it into the fire, but for how short a time will it retain its heat; and though it glowed just now, how very soon it loses all its warmth and returns again to its native coldness. Such is the heart of man. It is warm enough towards sin; it grows hot as coals of juniper, towards its own lusts; but naturally the heart is as cold as ice towards the things of God. You may think you have heated it for a little season under a powerful exhortation, or in presence of a solemn judgment, but how soon it returns to its natural state! We have heard of one who, seeing a large congregation all weeping under a sermon, said, "What a wonderful thing to see so many weeping under the truth!" and another added, "But there is a greater wonder than that—to see how they leave off weeping as soon as the sermon is over, concerning those things which ought to make them weep always and constantly." Ah, dear friends, no warmth of eloquence can ever warm the stony heart of man into a glow of love to Jesus; nay, no force of entreaty can get so much as a spark of gratitude out of the flinty heart of man. Though your hearts renewed by grace should be like a flaming furnace, yet you cannot warm your neighbour's heart with the divine heat; he will think you a fool for being so enthusiastic; he will turn upon his heel and think you a madman to be so concerned about matters that seem so trivial to him: the warmth that is in your heart you cannot communicate to him, for he is not, while unconverted, capable of receiving it. The heart of man, like marble, is stone-cold.

2. Then, again, like a stone, it is *hard*. You get the hard stone, especially some sorts of stone which have been hewn from granite-beds, and you may hammer as you will, but you shall make no impression. The heart of man is compared in Scripture to the nether millstone, and in another place it is even compared to the adamant stone; it is harder than the diamond; it cannot be cut; it cannot be broken; it cannot be moved. I have seen the great hammer of the law, which is ten times more ponderous than Nasmyth's great steam hammer, come down upon a man's heart, and the heart has never shown the slightest signs of shrinking. We have seen a hundred powerful shots sent against it, we have marked the great battery of the law with its ten great pieces of ordnance all fired against the heart of man, but man's heart has been harder even than the sheathing of the iron-clad ships, and the great shots of the law have dropped harmlessly against a man's conscience—he did not, he would not feel. What razor-edged sentence can cut your hearts? What needle-warning can prick your consciences? Alas, all means are unavailing! No arguments have power to move a soul so steeled, so thoroughly stony, hard, and impenetrable. Some of you now present, have given more than enough evidence of the hardness of your hearts. Sickness has befallen you, death has come in at your windows, affliction has come up against you, but like Pharaoh, you have said, "Who is the

Lord, that I should obey his voice? I will not bow my neck, neither will I do his will. I am my own master, and I will have my own pleasure and my own way. I will not yield to God." O rocks of iron and hills of brass, ye are softer than the proud heart of man!

3. Again, a stone is *dead*. You can find no feeling in it. Talk to it; it will shed no tears of pity, though you recount to it the saddest tales; no smiles will gladden it, though you should tell it the most happy story. It is dead; there is no consciousness in it; prick it and it will not bleed; stab it and it cannot die, for it is dead already. You cannot make it wince, or start, or show any signs of sensibility. Now, though man's heart is not like this as to natural things, yet spiritually this is just its condition. You cannot make it show one spiritual emotion. "Ye are dead in trespasses and sins," powerless, lifeless, without feeling, without emotion. Transient emotions towards good men have, even as the surface of a slab is wet after a shower, but real vital emotions of good they cannot know, for the showers of heaven reach not the interior of the stone. Melancthon may preach, but old Adam is too dead for him to quicken him. Ye may go down into the grave where the long sleep has fallen on humanity, and ye may seek to revive it, but there is no power in human tongue to revive the dead. Man is like the deaf adder which will not be charmed, charm we never so wisely. Tears are lost on him; threatenings are but as the whistlings of the wind, the preachings of the law, and even of Christ crucified—all these are null and void and fall hopelessly to the ground, so long as the man's heart continues what is by nature—dead, and hard, and cold.

4. Those three adjectives might be sufficient to give a full description, for if we add two more we shall but in some degree repeat ourselves. Man's heart is like a stone because *it is not easily to be softened*. Lay a stone in water as long as you will and you shall not find it readily subdued. There are some sorts of stone that yield to the stress of weather, especially in the smoky atmosphere and the sulphurous vapours of London; certain stones crumble to decay, but the stone of a man's heart no climate can affect, no weathers can subdue; it grows harder whether it be the soft sunshine of love or the harsh tempest of judgment that falls upon it. Mercy and love alike make it more solid, and knit its particles closer together; and surely until the Omnipotent himself speak the word, the heart of man grows harder, and harder, and harder, and refuses to be broken. There is an invention, I believe, for liquifying flints, and then afterwards they may be poured out in a solution which is supposed to have the virtue of resisting the action of the atmosphere when put upon certain limestones; but you never can liquify, except by a divine power, the flinty heart of man. Granite may be ground, may be broken into pieces, but unless God gets the hammer in his hand, and even he must put both hands to it, the great granitic heart of man will not yield in any way. Certain stones have their veins, and certain crystallic stones may be so dexterously struck, that they will frequently break even with a slight blow; but you can never find a vein in man's heart by which the attempt to conquer it will be assisted from within. You may smite right and left with death, with judgment, with mercy, with privileges with tears, with entreaties, with threatenings, and it will not break; nay, even the fires of hell, do not melt man's heart, for the damned in hell grow more hard by their agonies, and they hate God, and blaspheme him all the more because of the suffering they endure. Only Omnipotence itself, I say, can ever soften this hard heart of man.

5. So, then, man's heart is cold, and dead, and hard, and cannot be softened; and then, again—and this is but an enlargement of a former thought—*it is utterly senseless*, incapable of receiving impressions. Remember, again, I am not speaking of the heart of man physically, I am not speaking of it even as I would if I were teaching mental science; we are only now regarding it from a spiritual point of view. Men do receive mental impressions under the preaching of the Word; they often get

so uneasy that they cannot shake off their thoughts; but alas! their goodness is as the early cloud, and as the morning dew, and it vanishes as a dream. But, spiritually, you can no more impress the heart of man than you might leave a bruise upon a stone. Wax receives an impression from a seal, but not the stern, unyielding stone; if you have hot running wax you may make what mark you please upon it, but when you have the cold, cold stone, though you bear never so hard upon the stamp, there is no impression, the surface shows no trace of your labour. So is man's heart by nature. I know some who say it is not so, they do not like to hear human nature slandered, so they say. Well, friend, if though hast not this hard heart, why is it thou art not saved? I remember an anecdote of Dr. Gill which hits this nail on the head. It is said that a man came to him in the vestry of his chapel and said, "Dr. Gill, you have been preaching the doctrine of human inability, I don't believe you. I believe that man can repent and can believe, and is not without spiritual power." "Well," said the doctor, "have you repented and believed?" "No," said the other. "Very well, then," said he, "you deserve double damnation." And so I say to the man who boasts that he has not such a hard heart as this—have you laid hold of Christ? have you come to him? if you have not, then out of your own heart be you condemned, for you deserve double destruction from the presence of God, for having resisted the influences of God's Spirit and rejected his grace. I need not say more about the hardness of the human heart, as that will come up incidentally by-and-bye, when we are speaking of the heart of flesh.

But now, let us notice the danger to which this hard heart is exposed. A hard heart is exposed to the danger of *final impenitence*. If all these years the processes of nature have been at work with your heart, and have not softened it, have you not reason to conclude that it may be so even to the end? And then you will certainly perish. Many of you are no strangers to the means of grace. I speak to some of you who have been hearing the gospel preached ever since you were little ones: you went to the Sabbath school; mayhap, you were wont in your boy hood to listen to old Mr. So-and-so, who often brought tears to your eyes, and of late you have been here, and there have been times with this congregation when the word seemed enough to melt the very rocks and make the hard hearts of steel flow down in repentance, and yet you are still the same as ever. What does reason tell you to expect? Surely this should be the natural inference from the logic of facts you will continue as you are now, means will be useless to you, privileges will but become accumulated judgments, and you will go on till time is over, and eternity approaches, unblest, unsaved, and you will go down to the doom of the lost soul. "Oh!" saith one, "I hope not;" and I add, I hope not too; but I am solemnly afraid of it, especially with some of you. Some of you are growing old under the gospel, and you are getting so used to my voice that you could almost go to sleep under it. As Rowland Hill says of the blacksmith's dog, that at first he used to be afraid of the sparks, but afterwards got so used to it, that he could lie and sleep under the anvil; and there are some of you who can sleep under the anvil, with the sparks of God's wrath flying about your nostrils, asleep under the most solemn discourse. I do not mean with your eyes shut, for I might then point to you, but asleep in your hearts, your souls being given to slumber while your eyes may regard the preacher, and your ears may be listening to his voice.

And further, there is another danger, hearts that are not softened *grow harder and harder*; what little sensibility they seemed to have, at last departs. Perhaps there are some of you that can recollect what you were when you were boys. There is a picture in the Royal Academy at this hour, which teaches a good moral: there is a mother putting her children to bed, the father happens to be in just when they are going to their slumbers; the little ones are kneeling down saying their prayers; there

is only a curtain between them and the room where the father is, and he is sitting down; he is putting his hand to his head, and the tears are flowing very freely, for somehow he cannot stand it; he recollects when he too was taught to pray at his mother's knee, and though he has grown up forgetful of God and the things of God, he remembers the time when it was not so with him. Take care, my dear hearers, that you do not grow worse and worse; for it will be so; we either grow ripe or rotten, one of the two, as years pass over us. Which is it with you?

Then further, a man who has a hard heart is *Satan's throne*. There is a stone they tell us, in Scotland, at Scone, where they were wont to crown their old kings: the stone on which they crown the old king of hell is a hard heart; it is his choicest throne; he reigns in hell, but he counts hard hearts to be his choicest dominions.

Then again, the hard heart is *ready for anything*. When Satan sits upon it and makes it is throne, there is no wonder that from the seat of the scorner flow all manner of evil. And besides that, the hard heart is *impervious to all instrumentality*. John Bunyan, in his history of the "Holy War," represents old Diabolus, the devil, as providing for the people of Mansoul a coat of armour, of which the breastplate was a hard heart. Oh! that is a strong breastplate. Sometimes when we preach the gospel, we wonder that there is not more good done. I wonder that there is so much. When men sit in the house of God, armed up to their very chins in a coat of mail, it is not much wonder that the arrows do not pierce their hearts. If a man has an umbrella, it is no marvel if he does not get wet; and so when the showers of grace are falling, there are many of you who put up the umbrella of a hard heart, and it is no marvel if the dew of grace and the rain of grace do not drop into your souls. Hard hearts are the devil's life-guards. When he once gets a man in an armour of proof—that of a hard heart—"Now," says he, "you may go anywhere." So he sends them to hear the minister, and they make fun of him; he lets them read religious books, and they can find something to mock at there; he will then turn them even to the Bible, and with their hard heart they may read the Bible pretty safely, for even the Word of God the hard heart can turn to mischief, and find something to find fault with even in the person of Christ, and in the glorious attributes of God himself. I shall not stay longer upon this very painful subject; but if you feel that your hearts are hard, may your prayer go up to God, "Lord, melt my heart. None but a bath of blood divine can take the flint away; but do it Lord, and thou shalt have the praise."

II. Secondly, and briefly, A HEART OF FLESH AND ITS PRIVILEGES. "I will take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." In many—very many who are present to-night my text has been fulfilled. Let us join in praying for others whose hearts are still stony, that God would work this miracle in them, and turn their hearts to flesh.

What is meant by a heart of flesh? I means a heart that can feel on account of sin—a heart that can bleed when the arrows of God stick fast in it; it means a heart that can yield when the gospel makes its attacks—a heart that can be impressed when the seal of God's word comes upon it; it means a heart that is warm, for life is warm—a heart that can think, a heart that can aspire, a heart that can love—putting all in one—a heart of flesh means that new heart and right spirit which God giveth to the regenerate. But wherein does this heart of flesh consist; wherein does its tenderness consist? Well, its tenderness consists in three things. There is a *tenderness of conscience*. Men who have lost their stony hearts are afraid of sin, even *before sin* they are afraid of it. The very shadow of evil across their path frightens them. The temptation is enough for them, they flee from it as from a serpent; they would not dally and toy with it, lest they should be betrayed. Their conscience is alarmed even at the approach of evil, and away they fly; and in sin, for even tender hearts do sin,

they are uneasy.; As well might a man seek to obtain quiet rest on a pillow stuffed with thorns, as the tender conscience get any peace while a man in sinning. And then, *after* sin—here comes the pinch—the heart of flesh bleeds as though it were wounded to its very core. It hates and loathes and detests itself that ever it should have gone astray. Ah, stony heart, you can think of sin with pleasure, you can live in sin and not care about it; and after sin you can roll the sweet morsel under your tongue and say, "Who is my master? I care for none; my conscience does not accuse me." But not so the tender broken heart. Before sin, and in sin, and after sin, it smarts and cries out to God. So also *in duty* as well as in sin, the new heart is tender. Hard hearts care nothing for God's commandment; hearts of flesh wish to be obedient to every statute. "Only let me know my Master's will and I will do it." The hearts of flesh when they feel that the commandment has been omitted, or that the command has been broken, mourn and lament before God. Oh! there are some hearts of flesh that cannot forgive themselves, if they have been lax in prayer, if they have not enjoyed the Sabbath-day, if they feel that they have not given their hearts to God's praise as they should. These duties which hearts of stone trifle with and despise, hearts of flesh value and esteem. If the heart of flesh could have its way, it would never sin, it would be as perfect as its Father who is in heaven, and it would keep God's command without flaw of omission or of commission. Have you, dear friends, such a heart of flesh as this?

I believe a heart of flesh, again, is tender, not only with regard to sin and duty, but with regard to *suffering*. A heart of stone can hear God blasphemed and laugh at it; but our blood runs cold to hear God dishonoured when we have a heart of flesh. A heart of stone can bear to see its fellow creatures perish and despise their destruction; but the heart of flesh is very tender over others. "Faith its pity would reclaim, and snatch the firebrand from the flame." A heart of flesh would give its very life-blood if it might but snatch others from going down to the pit, for its bowels yearn and its soul moves toward its fellow sinners who are on the broad road to destruction. Have you, oh, have you such a heart of flesh as this?

Then to put it in another light, the heart of flesh is tender in three ways. *It is tender in conscience*. Hearts of stone make no bones, as we say, about great mischiefs; but hearts of flesh repent even at the very thought of sin. To have indulged a foul imagination, to have flattered a lustful thought, and to have allowed it to tarry even for a minute is quite enough to make a heart of flesh grieved and rent before God with pain. The heart of stone says, when it has done great iniquity, "Oh, it is nothing, it is nothing! Who am I that I should be afraid of God's law?" But not so the heart of flesh. Great sins are little to the stony heart, little sins are great to the heart of flesh—if little sins there be. Conscience in the heart of stone is seared as with a hot iron; conscience in the heart of flesh is raw and very tender; like the sensitive plant, it coils up its leaves at the slightest touch, it cannot bear the presence of evil; it is like a delicate consumptive, who feels every wind and is affected by every change of atmosphere. God give us such a blessedly tender conscience as that. Then again, the heart of flesh grows *tender of God's will*. My Lord Will-be-will is a great blusterer, and it is hard to bring him down to subject himself to God's will. When you have a man's conscience on God's side, you have only half the battle if you cannot get his will. The old maxim—

"Convince a man against his will
He's of the same opinion still."

is true with regard to this as well as regard to anything else. Oh! there are some of you that know the right, but you *will* do the wrong. You know what is evil, but you will to pursue it. Now, when the heart of flesh is given, the will bends like a willow, quivers like an aspen leaf in every

breath of heaven, and bows like an osier in every breeze of God's Spirit. The natural will is stern and stubborn, and you must rend it up by the roots; but the renewed will is gentle and pliable, feels the divine influence, and sweetly yields to it. To complete the picture, in the tender heart there is a *tenderness of the affections*. The hard heart does not love God, but the renewed heart does. The hard heart is selfish, cold, stolid. "Why should I weep for sin? Why should I love the Lord? Why should I give my heart to Christ?" The heart of flesh says—

"Thou know'st I love thee, dearest Lord,
But oh! I long to soar
Far from this world of sin and woe,
And learn to love thee more."

O may God give us a tenderness of affection, that we may love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.

Now, the privileges of this renewed heart are these. "'Tis here the Spirit dwells, 'tis here that Jesus rests." The soft heart is ready now to receive every spiritual blessing. It is fitted to yield every heavenly fruit to the honour and praise of God. Oh! if we had none but tender hearts to preach to, what blessed work our ministry would be. What happy success! What sowings on earth! What harvests in heaven! We may indeed pray that God may work this change if it were only that our ministry might be more often a saviour of life unto life, and not of death unto death. A soft heart is the best defence against sin, while it is the best preparative for heaven. A tender heart is the best means of watchfulness against evil, while it is also the best means of preparing us for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall shortly descend from heaven.

Now, my voice fails me, and in your hearts I certainly shall not be heard for my much speaking. Great complaints have been brought against somebody's sermons for being too long, though I hardly think they could have been mine. So let us be brief, and let us conclude; only we must press this enquiry home—Has God taken away the heart of stone and has he given you the heart of flesh. Dear friend, you cannot change your own heart. Your outward works will not change it; you may rub as long as ever you like outside of a bottle, but you could not turn ditch-water into wine; you may polish the exterior of your lanthorn, but it will not give you light until the candle burns within. The gardener may prune a crab tree, but all the pruning in the world won't into an apricot; so you may attend to all the moralities in the world, but these won't change your heart. Polish your shilling, but it will not change into gold; nor will your heart alter its own nature. What, then, is to be done? Christ is the great heart changer. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The Holy Spirit gives faith, and then through faith the nature is renewed. What sayest thou, sinner? Dost thou believe that Christ is able to save thee? Oh, trust him then to save thee, and if thou doest that thou art saved; thy nature is renewed, and the work of sanctification which shall begin to-night, shall go on until it shall come to its perfection, and thou, borne on angel's wings to heaven, "glad the summons to obey," shalt enter into felicity and holiness, and be redeemed with the saints in white, made spotless through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Religion—a Reality

A Sermon

(No. 457)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, June 22nd, 1862, by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life."—Deuteronomy 32:47.

IT APPEARS from this closing remark of Moses, that there were men in his time who thought religion to be vain, although, under the system which then existed, there were many plain proofs of its usefulness: for they who served God in those days prospered, and national advantages always followed nation obedience to God. Under the theocratic government of the Israelites in the wilderness, and in their early history when established in Canaan, their offences against God's law brought upon them famine, plague, or the scourge of marauding hosts; while repentance and a return to allegiance always brought them a deliverer, and a restoration of peace and plenty. They had visibly before their eyes proofs that God did reward virtue; and yet, notwithstanding this, there were some so besotted against God, that they said, "It is a vain thing to serve the Lord." Do you wonder, therefore, that there should be many such under the gospel? It would, indeed, be marvellous if there were not many more, for the gospel is a far more spiritual system than the Jewish dispensation, and its blessings are not of a carnal order. No blessing apparent to carnal eyes rests upon the godly, but sometimes the case appears to be reversed: we see the wicked prosper, and the righteous are trodden under foot. The Christian dispensation is one which requires much faith to receive it. We walk not by sight, but by faith alone; and it is little marvel that when ungodly men see the righteous afflicted, and discover that their comfort lies in matters which only faith can apprehend, they should cry out, "It is a vain thing," and should turn aside from the ordinances of God. Besides, to confess the truth, there have been so many counterfeits of true religion, that it is not remarkable that unconverted men should consider even the genuine article to be but a vain thing. Men have made pretences of wondrous sanctity, whilst inwardly full of rottenness; and sinners have learned to argue with terrible logic: "They are none of them good; they are all deceivers; the best of them are hypocrites, and religion itself is a vain thing." However false may be the conclusion here—and we believe it to be utterly so—yet we do not wonder that men, desiring to believe religion to be a falsehood, have found some support for their unbelief in the hypocrisy of professors.

Now we will grant you this morning that much of the religion which is abroad in the world is a vain thing. The religion of *ceremonies* is vain. If a man shall trust in the gorgeous pomp of uncommanded mysteries, if he shall consider that there resides some mystic efficacy in a priest, and that by uttering certain words a blessing is infallibly received, we tell him that his religion is a vain thing. You might as well go to the Witch of Endor for grace as to a priest; and if you rely upon words, the "*Abracadabra*" of a magician will as certainly raise you to heaven, or rather sink you to hell, as the performances of the best ordained minister under heaven. Ceremonies in themselves are vain, futile, empty. There are but two of God's ordaining, they are most simple, and neither of them pretend to have any efficacy in themselves. They only set forth an inward and

spiritual grace, not necessarily tied to them, but only given to those who by faith perceive their teachings. All ceremonial religion, no matter how sincere, if it consist in relying upon forms and observances, is a vain thing. So with *creed-religion*—by which I mean not to speak against creeds, for I love "the form of sound words," but that religion which lies in believing with the intellect a set of dogmas, without partaking of the life of God; all this is a vain thing. Again, that religion *which only lies in making a profession of what one does not possess*, in wearing the Christian name, and observing the ritual of the Church, but which does not so affect the character as to make a man holy, nor so touch the heart as to make a man God's true servant—such a religion is vain throughout. O my dear hearers, how much worthless religion may you see everywhere! So long as men get the name, they seem content without the substance. Everywhere, it matters not to what Church you turn your eye, you see a vast host of hypocrites, numerous as flies about a dead carcass. On all sides there are deceivers, and deceived; who write "Heaven" upon their brows, but have hell in their hearts; who hang out the sign of an angel over their doors, but have the devil for a host within. Take heed to yourselves; be not deceived, for he who tries the heart and searches the reins of the children of men is not mocked, and he will surely discern between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not.

But with all these allowances, we still this morning assert most positively that the religion of Christ Jesus, that which has been revealed to us of the Holy Ghost by the apostles and prophets, and specially by the Messiah himself, when truly received into the heart, is no vain thing. We shall handle the text four ways, taking the word "vain" in different shades of meaning. *It is no fiction it is no trifle; it is no folly; it is no speculation.* In each case we will prove our assertion by the second sentence—"Because it is your life."

I. First, then, the true religion of Christ, which consists in a vital faith in his person, his blood, and his righteousness, and which produces obedience to his commands, and a love to God, IS NOT A FICTION.

I am not going to argue this morning. I was never sent to argue, but to teach and speak dogmatically. I assert in the name of all those who have tried it, that true religion is not a fiction *to us*. It is to us the grandest of all realities, and we hope that our testimony and witness, if we be honest men, may prevail with others who may be sceptical upon this point. We say, then, that *the objects* of true religion are, to those who believe in Jesus, no fiction. *God the Father* to whom we look with the spirit of adoption, is no fiction to us. I know that to some men the Divine Being is a mere abstraction. As to communing with him, as to speaking to him, they think such wonders may have occurred to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, but to them such things are impossible. Now we do solemnly assure you, as men who would not lie in this matter, that God the Father is to us as real a person as the man from whose loins we sprang, and that we have as surely talked unto him, and he has as truly spoken to our hearts as ever we have spoken with our friend, and have been answered by him. We tell you that to us the being of God is a fact which influences our whole life, checks us when we would sin, forbids our weaker passions to rebel, and nerves our nobler powers to do or suffer. Our consciousness, our experience, our emotions, and our whole being, tell us that there is a God. We have had personal dealings with him; he has been with us in our chamber; we have seen his face in the sanctuary; we have cast our cares upon him; and therefore to us the Eternal and indwelling Father is no fiction. So is it with *Christ Jesus*. To mere professors Christ Jesus is never anything but a myth. They believe there was such a man, but he is only an historical personage to them. To true believers in Christ, however, he is a real person, now existing, and now dwelling

in the hearts of his people. And oh! I bear my witness that if there be anything which has ever been certified to my consciousness it is the existence of Jesus, the man, the Son of God. Oh friends, have we not, when our soul has been in a rapture, thrust our finger into the prints of the nails? Have we not been so drawn away from the outward world, that in spiritual communings we could say, He was to us as our brother that sucked the breasts of our mother, and when we found him without we did embrace him, and we would not let him go? His left hand has been under our head, and his right hand has embraced us. I know this will sound like a legend even to men who profess to be Christ's followers, but I question the reality of your piety if Christ be not one for whom you live, and in whom you dwell; with whom you walk, and in whom you hope soon to sleep that you may wake up in his likeness. A real Christ and a real God—no man has real religion till he knows these. So again *the Holy Spirit*, who is, with the Father and the Son, the one God of Israel; the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, indivisibly One and yet everlastingly Three—the Holy Spirit is also real, for

"He, in our hearts of sin and woe
 Makes living streams of grace arise,
 Which into boundless glory flow."

Tell us there is no Spirit? Why, about this we can speak positively. A fool may say that there is no magnetic influence, and that no electric streams can flow along the wires, but they who have once been touched by that mysterious power know it; and the Holy Spirit's influence on men is quite as much within the sphere of our recognition, if we have ever felt it, as is the influence of galvanism or magnetism. Those who have once felt the spiritual life know when it is flowing in; when its strength is withdrawn, and when it returns anew. They know that at times they can do all things; their heaviest trial is a joy, and their weightiest burden a delight; and that at other times they can do nothing, being bowed down to the very dust with weakness. They know that at times they enjoy peace with God through Jesus Christ, and that at other times they are disturbed in spirit. They have discovered, too, that these changes do not depend upon the weather, nor upon circumstances, nor upon any relation of one thought to another, but upon certain secret, mystic, and divine impulses which come forth from the Spirit of God, which make a man more than man, for he is filled with Deity from head to foot, and whose withdrawal makes him feel himself less than man, for he is filled with sin and drenched with iniquity, till he loatheth his own being. Tell us there is no Holy Spirit! We have seen his goings in the sanctuary, but as we shall have to mention these by-and-bye, we pass on, and only now affirm that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are to true Christians no fiction, no dream, no fancy, but as real and as true as persons whom we can see, things which we can handle, or viands which we can taste.

But further, we can also say that *the experience* which true religion brings is no fiction. Believe me, sirs, it is no fiction to *repent*; for there is a bitterness in it which makes it all too real. Oh, the agony of sin lying on an awakened conscience! If you have ever felt it, it will seem to you as the ravings of a madman when any shall tell you that religion is not real! When the great hammer of the law broke our hearts in pieces, it was a stern reality. These eyes have sometimes, before I knew the Saviour, been ready to start from my head with horror, and my soul has often been bowed down with a grief far too terrible ever to be told to my fellow-man, when I felt that I was guilty before God, that my Maker was angry with me, that he must punish me, and that I deserved and must suffer his eternal wrath. I do assure you there was no fiction there! And when the Spirit of God comes into the heart and takes all our grief away, and gives us *joy and peace in believing in Christ*,

there is no fiction then. Of course, to other men this is no evidence, except they will believe our honesty; but to us it is the very best of evidence. We were bidden to believe on Christ; it was all we were to do: to look to his cross, to believe him to be the propitiation for sin, and to trust in him to save us; we did so, and oh, the joy of that moment! In one instant we leaped from the depths of hell to the very heights of heaven in experience; dragged up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, our feet were set upon a rock, and we could sing for very joy. Oh, the mirth! oh, the bliss! oh, the ecstasy of the soul that can say—

"Happy, happy, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away,
Happy, happy, happy day."

That was no fiction, surely. If it be so, I will continue to cry, "Blessed fiction! blessed dream! may I contrive to believe thee; may I always be so deluded if this is to be deluded and misled!" *Since then*, look at the believer's experience. He has had as many troubles as other men have, but oh, what comforts he has had! He lost his wife, and as he stood there and thought his heart would break, he could still say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Child after child sickened before his loving gaze, and as they went one after the other to the tomb where he often wished he could have slept instead of them—while he mourned and wept as Jesus did, yet still he could say, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." When the house was burned—when the property vanished—when trade ran ill—when character was slandered—when the soul was desponding and all but despairing, yet there came in that one ray of light, "Christ is all, and all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." I can tell you, that Christians have often had their brightest days when other people thought they were in their darkest nights; and they have often had the best of dainties when there was a famine abroad. Is this a fiction? O sirs, we challenge you to find so blessed a fiction as this elsewhere! I saw last Friday a sight, enough to make one weep indeed: there in the back-room of the house, lay a fine youth, a member of this Church, sickening and near to death of consumption, and he talked to me joyously of his prospect of entering into the rest which remaineth for the people of God; there in the front-room, on the same floor, lay his sister, I suppose but some two years younger, withering under the same disease; and there sat the tender mother with her two children, thinking to lose them both within a few days, and though she said, it was natural to weep, yet she could say even under this sharp trial, "The Lord's name be magnified in it all." I say there was no fiction there. If you who think there is a fiction in such things could live among Christians—if you could see the poor cheerfully suffering—if you could mark the sick and how joyously they bear their pains—if you could see the dying and hear their shouts of triumph, you would say, "There *is* a reality here; there *is* something in true religion; let *me* die the death of the righteous; let my last end be like his!"

But yet further; as we are sure there is a reality in the objects and in the experience of true godliness, so are we quite clear that there is a reality in its *privileges*. One of the privileges of the Christian is *prayer*. It is the believer's privilege, to go to God and ask for what he wants, and have it. Now, sirs, I am absolutely certain that prayer is a reality. I shall not tell here my own experience. One reads not his love-letters in the streets, one tells not his own personal dealings with God in public; but if there be a fact that can be proved by ten thousand instances, and which therefore no reasonable man has any right to doubt—if there be anything that is true under heaven, it is true that God hears prayer when it cometh not out of feigned lips, and is offered through Jesus Christ.

I know when we tell the story out, men smile and say, "Ah, these were singular coincidences!" Why, I have seen in my life, answers to prayer so remarkable, that if God had rent the curtain of the heavens and thrust out his arm to work a deliverance, it could not have been more decidedly and distinctly a divine interposition than when he listened to my feeble cry for help. I speak not of myself as though I were different from other men in this, for it is so with all who have real godliness. They know that God hears them; they prove it to-day; they intend to prove it at this very hour.

Communion with Christ is another reality. The shadow of his cross is too refreshing to be a dream, and the sunlight of his face is too bright to be a delusion. Precious Jesus! thou art a storehouse of substantial delights and solid joy. Then, the privileges of *Christian Love towards one another* are real. I know they are not with some men. Why, look you at some of your fashionable Churches; if the poor people were to speak to the richer ones, what would the rich ones think of them? Why, snap their heads half off, and send them about their business! But where there is true Christianity, we feel that the only place in the world where there can ever be liberty, equality, and fraternity, is in the Church of Christ. To attempt this politically, is but to attempt an impossibility; but to foster it in the Church of God, where we are all allied to God, is but to nourish the very spirit of the gospel. I say there is a reality in Christian love, for I have seen it among my flock; and though some do not show it as they should, yet my heart rejoices that there is so much hearty brotherly love among you, and thus your religion is not a vain thing.

Once more upon this point, for I am spending all my time here while I need it for other points. The religion of Christ is evidently not a vain thing *if you look at its effects*. We will not take you abroad now to tell you of the effects of the gospel of Christ in the South Sea. We need not remind you of what it has done for the heathen, but let me tell you what it has done for men *here*. Ah! brethren, you will not mind my telling out some of the secrets, secrets that bring the tears to my eyes as I reflect upon them. When I speak of the thief, the harlot, the drunkard, the sabbath-breaker, the swearer, I may say "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye rejoice in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." How many a man has been going by the door there, and has said "I'll go in and hear Old Spurgeon." He came in to make merriment of the preacher, and very little that troubles *him*. But the man has stood there until the Word has gone home to him, and he who was wont to beat his wife, and to make his home a hell, has before long been to see me, and given me a grip of the hand and said, "God Almighty bless you, sir; there is something in true religion!" "Well, let us hear your tale," We have heard it, and delightful it has been in hundreds of instances. "Very well, send your wife, and let us hear what she says about you." The woman has come, and we have said "Well, what think you of your husband now, ma'am?" "Oh, sir, such a change I never saw in my life! He is so kind to us; he is like an angel now, and he seemed like a fiend before; Oh! that cursed drink, sir! everything went to the public-house; and then if I went up to the house of God, he did nothing but abuse me. Oh! to think that now he comes with me on Sunday; and the shop is shut up, sir; and the children who used to be running about without a bit of shoe or stocking, he takes them on his knee, and prays with them so sweetly. Oh! there is such a change!" Surly people say "Will it last? Will it last?" Well, I have seen it last the eight years of my pastorate, in many cases, and I know it will last for ever, for I am persuaded that it is God's work. We will put it to all the Social Science Societies; we will put it to all the different religions under heaven, whether they know the art of turning sinners into saints; whether they can make lions into lambs, and ravens into doves. Why I know a man who was as stingy a soul as could be, once, and now he is as generous a man as walks God's earth. There is another, he was not immoral, but

he was passionate, and now he is as quiet as a lamb. It is grace that has altered these characters, and yet you tell me that this is a fiction! I have not patience to answer you. A fiction! If religion does not prove itself to be true by these facts, then do not believe it; if it does not, when it comes into a neighborhood, turn it upside down, sweep the cobwebs out of its sky, clean the houses, take the men out of the public-houses; if it does not make swearers pray, and hard-hearted men tender and compassionate, then it is not worth a button. But our religion does do all this, and therefore we boldly say, it is not a vain thing.

Besides, to the man who really possesses it, *it is his life*. He is not a man and a Christian, but he is all a Christian. He is not as some are, men and Members of Parliament, who have many things to attend to, and attend Parliament also; but the man who is thoroughly a Christian is a Christian every bit of him. He lives Christianity; he eats it; he drinks it; he sleeps it; he walks it. Wherever you see him, he has his religion. His religion is not like a man's regimentals which he can take off and go in undress; it is inside of him; it is woven right through and through him. When the shuttle of his religion was thrown, it went right through the core of his heart, and you must kill that man to get his religion out of him. Racks may tear his nerves and sinews, but they cannot tear away his hope, for it is essentially and vitally part and parcel of himself. Ah! my ladies and gentlemen, you who think religion is no more real than the life of a butterfly, it is you who are unreal in your fancies, and your follies; religion is the substance, and your life is only the shadow! Oh! you workingmen, who think that to be godly is but to indulge a dream, you know not what you say. All else is fiction but this; all else is but a moon-beam phantom, but this is sun-lit reality. God give you grace to get it, and then you will feel we have not spoken too strongly, but rather have spoken too little of that which is essentially and really true.

II. Secondly, "It is not a vain thing"—that is, IT IS NO TRIFLE.

If religion be false, it is the basest imposition under heaven; but if the religion of Christ be true, it is the most solemn truth that ever was known! It is not a thing that a man dares to trifle with if it be true, for it is at his soul's peril to make a jest of it. If it be not true it is detestable, but if it be true it deserves all a man's faculties to consider it, and all his powers to obey it. It is not a trifle. Briefly consider why it is not. *It deals with your soul*. If it dealt with your body it were no trifle, for it is well to have the limbs of the body sound, but it has to do with *your soul*. As much as a man is better than the garments that he wears, so much is the soul better than the body. It is your *immortal* soul it deals with. Your soul has to live for ever, and the religion of Christ deals with its destiny. Can you laugh at such words as heaven and hell, at glory and at damnation? If you can, if you think these trifles, then is the faith of Christ to be trifled with. Consider also with whom it connects you—*with God*; before whom angels bow themselves and veil their faces. Is HE to be trifled with? Trifle with your monarch if you will, but not with the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Recollect that *those who have ever known anything of it* tell you it is no child's play. The *saints* will tell you it is no trifle to be converted. They will never forget the pangs of conviction, nor the joys of faith. They tell you it is no trifle to have religion, for it carries them through all their conflicts, bears them up under all distresses, cheers them under every gloom, and sustains them in all labour. They find it no mockery. The Christian life to them is something so solemn, that when they think of it they fall down before God, and say, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe." And *sinner*s, too, when they are in their senses, find it no trifle. When they come to die they find it no little thing to die without Christ. When conscience gets the grip of them, and shakes them, they find it no small thing to be without a hope of pardon—with guilt upon the conscience, and no means of getting rid of it. And,

sirs, *true ministers of God* feel it to be no trifle. I do myself feel it to be such an awful thing to preach God's gospel, that if it were not "Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel," I would resign my charge this moment. I would not for the proudest consideration under heaven know the agony of mind I felt but this one morning before I ventured upon this platform! Nothing but the hope of winning souls from death and hell, and a stern conviction that we have to deal with the grandest of all realities, would bring me here.

A pastor's office is no sinecure. A man that has the destinies of a kingdom under his control, may well feel his responsibility; but he who has the destiny of souls laid instrumentally at his door, must travail in birth, and know a mother's pangs; he must strive with God, and know an agony and yet a joy which no other man can meddle with. It is no trifle to us, we do assure you; oh! make it no trifle to yourselves. I know I speak to some triflers this morning, and perhaps to some trifling professors. Oh! professors, do not live so as to make worldlings think that your religion is a trifling thing! Be cheerful, but oh! be holy! Be happy, for that is your privilege; but oh! be heavenly-minded, for that is your duty. Let men see that you are not flirting with Christ, but that you are married to him. Let them see that you are not dabbling in this as in a little speculation, but that it is the business of your life, the stern business of all your powers to live to Christ, Christ also living in you.

III. But next, and very briefly, for time will fly; the religion of Christ is no vain thing—that is, **IT IS NO FOLLY.**

Thinking men! Yes, by the way, we have had thinking men who have been able to think in so circuitous a manner that they have thought it consistent with their consciences to profess to hold the doctrines of the Church of England, and to be Romanists or infidels! God deliver us from ever being able to think in their way! I always dislike the presence of man who carries a gun with him which will discharge shot in a circle. Surely he is a very ill companion, and if he should turn your enemy how are you to escape from him? Give me a straightforward, downright man, who says what he means, and means what he says, and I would sooner have the grossest reprobate who will speak plainly what he means, than I would have the most dandy of gentlemen who would not hurt your feelings, but who will profess to believe as you do, while in his heart he rejects every sentiment, and abhors every thought which you entertain. I trust I do not speak to any persons here who can think so circuitously as this. Still, you say, "Well, but the religion of Christ, why, you see, it is the poor that receive it." Bless God it is! "Well, but not many thinking people receive it." Now that is not true, but at the same time, if they did not we would not particularly mind, because all thinking people do not think aright, and very many of them think very wrongly indeed; but such a man as Newton could think and yet receive the gospel, and master-minds, whom it is not mine just now to mention, have bowed down before the sublimity of the simple revelation of Christ, and have felt it to be their honour to lay their wealth of intellect at the feet of Christ. But, sirs, where is the folly of true religion! Is it a folly to be providing for the world to come? "Oh, no." Is it altogether a folly to believe that there is such a thing as justice? I trow not. And that if there be such a thing as justice it involves punishment? There is no great folly there. Well, then, is it any folly to perceive that there is no way of escaping from the effects of our offences except justice be satisfied? Is that folly? And if it be the fact that Christ has satisfied justice for all who trust in him, is it folly to trust him? If it be a folly to escape from the flames of hell, then let us be fools. If it be folly to lay hold of him who giveth us eternal life—oh, blessed folly! let us be more foolish still. Let us take deep dives into the depths of this foolishness. God forbid that we should do anything else but glory in being such fools as this for Christ's sake! What, sirs, is your wisdom? your wisdom dwells in denying

what your eyes can see—a God; in denying what your consciences tell you—that you are guilty; in denying what should be your best hope, what your spirit really craves after—redemption in Christ Jesus. Your folly lies in following a perverted nature, instead of obeying the dictates of one who points you to the right path. You are wise and you drink poison; we are fools and we take the antidote. You are wise and you hunt the shadow; we are fools and we grasp the substance. You are wise, and you labour and put your money into a bag which is full of holes, and spend it for that which is not bread, and which never gives you satisfaction; and we are fools enough to be satisfied, to be happy, to be perfectly content with heaven and God—

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

Blessed folly! Oh, blessed folly! But it is not a foolish thing; for *it is your life*. Ah, sirs, if you would have philosophy it is in Christ. If you would accomplish the proudest feat of human intellect, it is to attain to the knowledge of Christ crucified. Here the man whose mind makes him elephantine, may find depths in which he may swim. Here the most recondite learning shall find itself exhausted. Here the most brilliant imagination shall find its highest flights exceeded. Here the critic shall have enough to criticise throughout eternity; here the reviewer may review, and review again, and never cease. Here the man who understands history may crown his knowledge by the history of God in the world; here men who would know the secret, the greatest secret which heaven, and earth, and hell can tell, may find it out, for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant. All the learning of man is doubtless folly to the angels, but the foolishness of God in the gospel is wisdom to cherubim and seraphim, and by the Church shall be made known to them in ages to come the manifold wisdom of God.

IV. And now for the last point, hurriedly again: "It is not a vain thing,"—that is, IT IS NO SPECULATION, no hap-hazard.

People sometimes ask us what we think about the heathen, whether they will be saved or not. Well, sirs, there is room for difference of opinion there; but I should like to know what you think about *yourselves*—will you be saved or not?—for after all that is a question of a deal more importance to you. Now the religion of Christ is not a thing that puts a man into a salvable state, but it saves him. It is not a religion which offers him something which *perhaps* may save him; no it saves him out and out, on the spot. It is not a thing which says to a man "Now I have set you a-going, you must keep on yourself." No, it goes the whole way through, and saves him from beginning to end. He that says "Alpha" never stops till he can say "Omega" over every soul. I say the religion of Christ: I know there are certain shadows of it which do not carry such a reality as this with them, but I say that the religion of the Bible, the religion of Jesus Christ, is an absolute certainty. "Whosoever believeth on him hath eternal life, and he shall never perish, neither shall he come into condemnation." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Well," says one, "I should like to know what this very sure religion is." Well, it is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Trust Christ with all that you have and you shall be saved. "Well," says one, "but when?" Why, now, here, this morning, on the spot: you shall be saved now. It is not a vain thing; it is not a speculation, for it is true to you *now*. The word is nigh thee; on thy lip and in thy heart. If thou wilt with thy heart believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ thou shalt be saved, and saved now. "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are Christ Jesus." This is a great and glorious truth, and it is true to-day—"Whosoever believeth in him *hath* everlasting life." "But is it true to me?" saith one. My text says "It is not a vain thing for *you*." "Oh, it will suit other people; it will not do for me." It will suit *you*, sir—"It is not a vain thing *for you* because it is your life." If you have come up from the country, it is no vain thing for you, my dear friends; if you reside in town, amidst its noise and occupations, it is not a vain thing for you, my dear hearers. It is not a vain thing for any; if you do but lay hold of it, and it lays hold of you—if you receive the reality and vitality of it into your soul, be you who you may, it will not be a vain thing to you; not a "perhaps" and an "if," a "but" and a "peradventure," but a "shall" and a "will," a divine, an eternal, an everlasting and immutable certainty. Whosoever believeth in Christ—let the earth shake; let the mountains rock; let the sun grow old with age, and the moon quench her light—shall be saved. Unless God can change his mind—and that is impossible; unless God can break his word—and to say so is blasphemy; unless Christ's blood can lose its efficacy—and that can never be; unless the Spirit can be anything but Eternal and Omnipotent—and to suppose so were ridiculous—he that believeth on Christ, must at last, before the eternal throne, sing hallelujah to God and the Lamb. "Well," says one. "'tis a vain thing, I'm sure, to me, for I'm only a poor working-man; religion no doubt, is a very fine thing for gentlefolk, but it doesn't do for a man as has to work hard, for he's something else to think on." Well, you are just the man that I should think it would do for. Why, it is little enough you have here, my dear friend, and that is the very reason why you should have eternal joys hereafter. If there be one man that religion can bless more than another—and I do not know that there is—it is the poor man in his humble cot. Why, this will put sweets into your cup; this will make your little into enough, and sometimes into more than enough; you shall be rich while you are poor, and happy when others think you are miserable. "Well," says the rich man, "It is nothing to me; I do not see that it will suit me." Why, it is the very thing *for you*, sir; in fact, you are the man who ought to have it, because, see what you have to lose when you die, unless you have religion to make up for it! What a loss it will be for you when you have to lose all your grandeur and substance! What a loss it will be for you to go from the table of Dives to the hell of Dives! Surely it is not a vain thing *for you*. "Well," says another, "but I am a moral and upright person; indeed, I do not think anybody can pull my character to pieces." I hope nobody wants to; but this is not a vain thing for you, because, let me tell you, that fine righteousness of yours is only fine in your own esteem. If you could only see it as God sees it, you would see it to be as full of holes as ever beggars' rags were when at last they were consigned to the dust-heap. I say your fine righteousness, my lady, and yours, Sir Squire from the country, no matter though you have given to the poor, and fed the hungry, and done a thousand good things; if you are relying on them, you are relying on rotten rags, in which God can no more accept you than he can accept the thief in his dishonesties. "All our righteousness are as filthy rags, and we are all as an unclean thing." It is not a vain thing for you, then. "Oh, but I am a young man just in my teens, and growing up to manhood; I think I ought to have a little pleasure." So I think, friend, and if you want a great deal of it, be a Christian. "Oh, but I think young people should enjoy themselves." So do I. I never was an advocate for making sheep without their first being lambs, and I would let the lambs skip as much as they like; but if you want to lead a happy and a joyous life, give you young days to Jesus. Who says that a Christian is miserable? Sir, you lie; I tell you to your teeth that you know not what Christianity is, or else you would know that the Christians are the most joyous people under heaven. Young man, I would like you to have a glorious youth;

I would like you to have all the sparkle and the brilliance which your young life can give you. What have you better than to live and to enjoy yourself? But how are you to do it? Give your Creator your heart, and the thing is done. It is not a vain thing for you. "Ah!" says the old man, "but it is a vain thing for me; my time is over; if I had begun when I was a lad it might have done; but I am settled in my habits now; I feel sure, sir, it is too late for me; when I hear my grand-children say their prayers as they are going to bed, pretty dears, when they are singing their evening hymn, I wish I was a child again; but my heart has got hard, and I cannot say 'Our Father' now; and when I do get to 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,' I get stuck there, I do not know how to get over that, for I have not forgiven old Jones yet who robbed me in that lawsuit; and then you know I am infirm, and have these rheumatics, and a hundred other pains; I do not think religion will suit me." Well, it is just the very thing that will suit you, because it will make you young again. What, "Can a man be born again when he is old?" That is what Nicodemus asked. Yes, a man can be born again, so that the babe shall die a hundred years old. Oh! to make the autumn of your life and the coming winter of your last days into a new spring and a blessed summer—this is to be done by laying hold of Christ now; and then you shall feel in your old veins the young blood of the new spiritual life, and you will say, "I count the years I lived before *a death*, but now I begin to live."

I do not know whether I have picked out every character; I am afraid I have not; but this thing I know, though you may be under there, or up in the corner yonder where my eye cannot reach you, yet you may hear this voice and I hope you may hear it when you are gone from this house back to your country-towns and to your houses—

"Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live!
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.
After death its joys will be
Lasting as eternity!
Be the living God my friend,
Then my bliss shall never end."

And this is the gospel which is preached unto you. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ"—that is trust him—"and thou shalt be saved." May God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

The Friend of Sinners

A Sermon

(No. 458)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, June 29th, 1862, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."—Isaiah 53:12.

A VAGUE notion is abroad in the world that the benefit of Christ's passion is intended only for good people. The preaching of some ministers, and the talk of some professors, would lead the uninstructed to imagine that Christ came into the world to save the righteous, to call the godly to repentance, and to heal those who never were sick. There is in most sinners' consciences, when they are aroused, a frightful fear that Christ could not have come to bless such as they are, but that he must have intended the merit of his blood and the efficacy of his passion for those who possess good works or feelings to recommend them to him. Dear friends, you will clearly see, if you will but open one eye, how inconsistent such a supposition is with the whole teaching of Scripture. Consider the *plan* itself. It was a plan of salvation and of necessity it was intended to bless sinners. Wherefore salvation if men be not lost, and for whom salvation but for the ruined? The plan was based in grace, but how "*grace*" unless it was meant for persons who deserve nothing? If you have to deal with creatures who have not sinned, and have been obedient, what need of grace? Build then on justice; let merit have its way. But as the whole covenant is a covenant of grace, and as in the whole matter it was ordained that grace should reign through righteousness unto eternal life, it is plain enough from the very plan itself that it must have to do with sinners and not with the righteous. Moreover, think of the *work* itself. The work of Christ was to bring in a perfect righteousness. For whom, think you? For those who had a righteousness? That were a superfluity. Why should he weave a garment for those who were already clothed in scarlet and fine linen? He had, moreover, to shed his blood. For whom his blood? Wherefore the agony in the garden? Wherefore the cry upon the cross? For the perfect? Surely not, beloved. What need had they of an atonement? Verily, brethren, the fact that Jesus Christ bled for sin upon the cross bears, on its very surface, evidence that he came into the world to save *sinners*. And then look at *God's end* in the whole work. It was to glorify himself, but how could God be glorified by washing spotless souls, and by bringing to everlasting glory by grace those who could have entered heaven by merit? Inasmuch as the plan and design both aim at laying the greatness of human nature in the dust, and exalting God, and making his love and his mercy to be magnified, it is implied as a matter of necessity, that it came to deal with undeserving, ill-deserving sinners, or else that end and aim never could be accomplished. Salvation needs a sinner as the raw material upon which to exercise its workmanship; the precious blood that cleanses needs a filthy sinner upon whom to show its power to purge; the atonement of Christ needs guilt upon which to exercise itself in the taking of it away; and it is absurd, it is ridiculous, it is unworthy of God, to suppose a scheme of salvation, a work so tremendous as the atonement of Christ, and an aim so splendid as the glorification of God, unless there be sinners to be the instruments of God's glory through being the partakers of God's grace. A

moment's thought will be enough to convince us that the whole plan is made for sinners, and that "Jesus Christ died for the ungodly." Indeed, dear friends, it is only when we get this view very clearly before us that we see Jesus in his glory. When does the shepherd appear most lovely? It is a fair picture to pourtray him in the midst of his flock, feeding them in the green pastures, and leading them beside the still waters; but if my heart is to leap for joy, give me the shepherd pursuing his stray sheep over the mountains; let me see him bringing home that sheep upon his shoulders rejoicing; let me hear his song of mirth when he calleth upon his friends and neighbours to rejoice with him because he has found the sheep which was lost. When looks our God most like a loving and tender father? Truly he looketh blessed when he divideth his inheritance among his sons, but I never saw him so resplendent in his fatherhood as when he runneth out to meet the prodigal, throweth his arms about his neck, and kisseth him, crying— "My son that was dead is alive again." Indeed, for some offices of Christ, it is absolutely necessary that there should be a sinner for us to see any meaning in them at all. He is a priest. What need of a priest except for the sins of the people? Why, I dare to say it, Christ's priesthood is a mockery and Christ's sacrifice is ridiculous unless there be sin in the world, and sinners whom Jesus came to save. Brethren, how is he a Saviour except to the lost? How is he a physician but to the sick? How is he like the brazen serpent if he doth not save the sin-bitten, or how the scapegoat if he doth not bear the sin of transgressors?

Our text, in its threefold character, shows the intimate connection which exists between Jesus and sinners, for in none of its sentences is there meaning unless there be a sinner, and unless Christ has come into connection with him. It is this one point which I want to work out this morning, and may God bless it to many a sinner's troubled conscience. "He was numbered with the transgressors; he bare the sin of many, and he made intercession for the transgressors." It is for transgressors all the way through. Bring in a company of righteous people who think they have no sin and they cannot appreciate the text; in fact it can have no meaning to them.

I. We shall begin then, by taking the first sentence. To the sinner, troubled and alarmed on account of guilt, there will be much comfort in the thought that CHRIST IS ENROLLED AMONG SINNERS. "He was numbered with the transgressors."

In what sense are we to understand this? "He was numbered with the transgressors."

He was numbered with them, first, *in the census of the Roman empire*. There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed, and the espoused wife of Joseph, being great with child, must travel to Bethlehem that Christ may be born there, and that he may be numbered with the transgressing people who, for their sins, were subject to the Roman yoke.

Years rolled on, and that child who had been early numbered with transgressors, and had received the seal of transgression in the circumcision, which represents the putting away of the flesh—that child, having come to manhood, goes forth into the world and is numbered with transgressors *in the scroll of fame*. Ask public rumour "What is the character of Jesus of Nazareth?" and it cannot find a word in its vocabulary foul enough for him. "This———" they sometimes said; and our translators have inserted the word "fellow" because in the original there is an ellipsis, the evangelists, I suppose, hardly liking to write the word which had been cast upon Christ Jesus. Fame, with her lying tongue, said he was a drunken man and a wine-bibber, because he would not yield to the asceticism of the age. He would not, since he came to be a man among men, do other than eat and drink as other men did. He came not to set an example of asceticism but of temperance; he came both eating and drinking, and they said at once, "Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber." They called him mad. His warm enthusiasm, his stern and unflinching rebukes of wickedness in high

places, brought upon him the accusation that he had a devil. "Thou has a devil and art mad," said they. They called the Master of the house Beelzebub! Even the drunkards made him their song, and the vilest thought him viler than themselves, for he was, by current rumour, numbered with the transgressors.

But to make the matter still more forcible, "he was numbered with transgressors in the *courts of law*." The ecclesiastical court of Judaism, the Sanhedrim, said of him, "Thou blasphemest;" and they smote him on the cheek. Written down among the offenders against the dignity of God against the security of the Jewish Church, you find the name of Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified. The courts civil also asserted the same. Pilate may wash his hands in water, and say, "I find no fault in him," but still, driven by the infernal clamours of an angry people, he is compelled to write, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews;" and he gives him up to die as a malefactor who has rebelled against the sovereign law of the land. Herod, too, the Jewish tetrarch, confirms the sentence, and so, with two pens at once, Jesus Christ is written down by the civil leaders among transgressors.

Then, *the whole Jewish people* numbered him with transgressors; nay, they reprobated him as a more abominable transgressor than a thief and a murderer who had excited sedition. Barabbas is put in competition with Christ, and they say, "Not this man, but Barabbas." See, brethren, his being numbered with transgressors is no fiction. Lo, he bears the transgressor's scourging! He is tied to the whipping-post, his back is marred and scarred; the ploughers make deep furrows, and the blood flows in streams. He is numbered with transgressors, for he bears the felon's cross; he comes into the street bowed down with the weight of his own gibbet, which he must carry upon his raw and bleeding shoulders; he goes along to the place of doom; he comes to Calvary—the place of a skull—and there, hoisted upon the cross, hanging in mid-air, as if earth rejected him and heaven refused him shelter, he dies the ignominious death of the cross, and is thus numbered with transgressors. But will there be none to enter a protest? Will no eye pity? Will no man declare his innocence? None; they are all silent! Silent, did I say? 'Tis worse! All earth holds up its hands for his death; it is carried unanimously. Jew and Gentile, bond and free, they are all there. They thrust out the tongue; they hoot; they laugh; they cry, "Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." His name is written in the calendar of crime by the whole universe; for he is despised and rejected of men; *of all men* is he accounted to be the off-scouring of all things, and is put to grief. But will not heaven interfere? O God, upon thy throne, wilt thou let the innocent suffer? He is fast nailed to the tree, and cries in agony, "I thirst." Wilt thou permit this man to be numbered with transgressors? Is it rightly done? It is; heaven confirms it. He has no sin of his own, but he has the sin of his people upon his shoulders; and God, the Eternal Judge, shows that he too considers him to be in the roll of transgressors, for he veils his face; and the Eternal Father betakes him to his hiding-place, and Christ can neither see a smile nor a glance of his Father's face, till he shrieks in agony so unutterable, that the words cannot express the meaning of the Redeemer's soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The only answer from heaven being, "I must forsake transgressors; thou art numbered with them, and therefore, I must forsake thee." But surely the doom will not be fulfilled? Certainly, he will be taken down ere he dies? Death is the curse for sin; it cannot come on any but transgressors; it is impossible for the innocent to die, as impossible as for immortality to be annihilated. Surely, then, the Lord will deliver his Son at the last moment, and having tried him in the furnace, he will bring him out? Nay, not so; he must become obedient to death, even the death of the cross. He dies without a protest on the part of earth, or heaven, or hell; he that was numbered with the transgressors, having worn the transgressor's crown of thorns,

lies in the transgressor's grave. "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." It is a marvellous thing, brethren, a marvellous thing! Who ever heard of an angel being numbered with devils? Who ever heard of Gabriel being numbered with fiends? But this is more marvellous than that would be. Here is the Son of God numbered, not with the sons of men (that were a gracious act) but numbered with transgressors; numbered, not with the faithful who struggle after purity; numbered, not with those who repel temptation and resist sin; numbered, not with those who earn unto themselves a good degree and much boldness in the faith—that were a marvellous condescension; but here it is written, "He was numbered *with the transgressors*."

I must pause here a moment, and get you to think this matter over a little. It is a strange and wonderful thing, and ought not to be passed by in silence. Why, think you, was Christ numbered with transgressors? First, surely, because *he could the better become their advocate*. I believe, in legal phraseology, in civil cases, the advocate considers himself to be part and partner with the person for whom he pleads. You hear the counsellor continually using the word "we;" he is considered by the judge to represent the person for whom he is an advocate. In some suits of law, there is on the part of the bar and the bench, a perfect identification of the counsellor with the client; nor can they be looked upon in the eye of the law as apart from one another. Now, Christ, when the sinner is brought to the bar, appears there himself. The trumpet sounds; the great assize is set. Come, come, ye sinners, come to the bar to be tried. There stands the man whose hands are pierced; he standeth numbered with transgressors. Let the trial proceed. What is the accusation? He stands to answer it; he points to his side, his hands, his feet, and challenges Justice to bring anything against the sinners whom he represents; he pleads his blood, and pleads so triumphantly, being numbered with them and having a part with them, that the Judge proclaims, "Let them go their way; deliver them from going down into the pit, for he at their head hath found a ransom."

But there is another reason why Christ was numbered with transgressors, namely, *that he might plead with them*. Suppose a number of prisoners confined in one of our old jails, and there is a person desirous to do them good, imagine that he cannot be admitted unless his name is put down in the calendar. Well, out his abundant love to these prisoners he consents to it, and when he enters to talk with them, they perhaps think that he will come in with cold dignity; but he says, "Now, let me say to you first of all that I am one of yourselves." "Well," they say, "but have you done aught that is wrong?" "I will not answer you that," saith he; "but if you will just refer to the calendar you will find my name there; I am written down there among you as a criminal." Oh, how they open their hearts now! They opened their eyes with wonder first, but now they open their hearts, and they say, "Art thou become like one of us? Then we will talk with thee." And he begins to plead with them. Sinner, dost thou see this? Christ puts himself as near on a level with thee as he can. He cannot be sinful as thou art, for he is God and perfect man; but he so puts his name down in the list that when the roll is called his name is called over with thine. Oh, how near doth he come to thee in thy ruined state!

Then he does this that *sinners may feel their hearts drawn to him*. What dost thou become poor as I am that I may be made rich? Jesu, Son of God, dost thou allow thyself to be numbered among lost ones that thou mightest find me? Oh, then my soul shall open itself to give thee a hearty reception. Come in, thou loving Saviour, abide with me, and go no more out for ever. There is a tendency in awakened sinners to be afraid of Christ; but who will be afraid of a man that is numbered with us, and put down in the same list with us? Surely now we may come boldly to him, and confess

our guilt. He that is numbered with us cannot condemn us. He whose name is down in the same indictment with ourselves, cometh not to condemn, but to absolve; not to curse, but to bless.

He was put down in the transgressors' list *that we might be written in the red roll of the saints*. He was holy, and written among the holy; we were guilty, and numbered among the guilty; he transfers his name from yonder list to this black indictment, and ours are taken from the indictment, foul and filthy, and written in the roll which is fair and glorious, for there is a transfer made between Christ and his people. All that we have goes to Christ, sin and all; and all that Christ has comes to us. His righteousness, his blood, and everything that he hath belongeth unto us.

Dear hearers, before I leave this point I want to put this to you. Is this yours by faith? Remember, faith is wanted here; nothing else. "He was numbered with transgressors." Oh, soul, can thy heart say, "Then if he was numbered with me, if he put his name down where mine stands in that terrific roll, then I will believe in him that he is able and willing to save me, and I will trust my soul in his hands?" I conjure thee by the living God do it, man, and thy soul is saved. Oh, by him who from the highest throne in glory stooped to the cross of deepest ignominy, trust thy soul with him. It is all he asks of thee, and this he gives thee. Blessed Master, would that thou couldst stand here, and say, "Sinners, full of iniquity, I stood with you; God accounted me as if I had committed your sin, and visited me as if I had been a transgressor; trust me; cast your souls upon my perfect righteousness; wash in my cleansing blood, and I will make you whole, and present you faultless before my Father's face."

II. We are taught in the next sentence, that Christ "BARE THE SINS OF MANY."

Here it is as clear as noon-day, that Christ dealt with *sinners*. Do not say Christ died for those who have done no wrong. That is not the description given. It is clear, I say, to everyone that chooses to look, that Christ could not bear the sins of those who had no sins, but could only bear the sins of men who were sinful and guilty. Briefly, then, but very plainly, to recount the old, old story over again: man stood with a load of sin upon his shoulders, so heavy that it would have crushed him lower than the lowest hell; Christ Jesus came into the world, stood in the room, place, and stead of his people; and he did, in the expressive words of the text, bear their sins—that is to say, their sins were really, not in a legal fiction, but really transferred from them to him. You see, a man cannot bear a thing which is not on his back; it is impossible that he can bear it unless it is actually there. The word "bear," implies weight, and weight is the sure indicator of reality. Christ did bear sin in its fulness, vileness, and condemnation upon his own shoulders. Comprehend this, then, and you have the marrow of the subject. Christ did really, literally, and truly, take the sins that belonged to all who do believe on him, and those sins did actually and in very deed become his sins; (not that he had committed them, nor that he had any part or lot in them, except through the imputation to which he had consented, and for which he came in to the world,) and there lay the sins of all his people upon Christ's shoulders.

Then notice, that as he did bear them, so other texts tell us that *he did bear them away*. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Sin being on his head, the scape-goat took it away, away, away. Where? Into the wilderness of forgetfulness. If it be sought for it shall not be found; the Everlasting God seeth it no more, it hath ceased to be, for he hath finished iniquity and made an end of sin; and when there is an end of it what more can be said? Christ took our debts, but he was not long before he paid them all. Where, then, are the debts? There are no debts now; there is not one in God's book against his chosen, for Jesus died. If Christ hath paid the debt, then there is no debt left; it is gone. I can rejoice in its discharge; I can mourn that ever I cast myself

into such a position, but the debt itself I gone. "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." "I will cast their sins into the midst of the sea." And yet again, "I will put away thy sin like a cloud, and thine iniquity like a thick cloud." Now, there were some clouds during the last week, but where are they now? They have turned to rain; they are gone; no strong-winged angel could find those clouds again; there are no such things; they are gone. And so with believers' sins, they were black, thick, thick clouds; full of tempests; big with lightnings and with thunder; but they are gone. The drops have fallen upon Christ; the thunder and the lightning have spent their fury upon him, and the clouds are gone, for Christ has taken them away. "He bare the sins of many," and he bore them away for ever.

And then, beloved, you must understand that if it be so, if Christ did really bear his people's sins, and did bear them away—and since a thing cannot be in two places at one time, *there is now no sin abiding upon those for whom Jesus died.* "And who are they?" you say. Why, all those who trust him. Any man whatsoever, the wide world over, who shall ever trust Christ, may know that no sin can be with him because his sin was laid on Christ. Oh, I do delight in this precious doctrine! If anything could unloose my poor stammering tongue, this might, to see sin literally transferred so that there is none left! I cannot express the delight and joy of my soul at this moment, in contemplation of the blessed deliverance and release which Christ has given. I can only sing out again with Kent—

"Sons of God, redeemed by blood,
 Raise your songs to Zion's God—
 Made from condemnation free,
 Grace triumphant sing with me."

Now, do you not see that his must be for sinners? See, you black ones, you filthy ones, you lost ones, you ruined ones, this is for sinners. You see it does not say it was for *sensible* sinners; no, no, but sinners. It does not say, "He was numbered with *awakened* transgressors;" no, it is "transgressors." It does not say that he bare the sins of tender-hearted sinners; no, but "he bare the sin of many." This is the only description I can find in my text. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and if in very deed and truth I know myself to be this day a sinner, I may trust Christ, and trusting Christ I may know, as surely as there is a God in heaven, that Jesus Christ took my sins and carried them all away. Now, I want to know whether you have got this by an act of faith this morning. "Oh," says one, "I am a sinner, but, but—" Well, what but? If you be a sinner, you are commanded to trust Christ this morning. "Oh, but—" I will have no "buts," sir, no "but" whatever. Are you a sinner? Yes or no. If you say "No," then I have nothing to say to you; Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If you are a sinner, to you is the Word of this salvation sent. "But I have been a thief!" I suppose a thief is a sinner? "But I have been a drunkard!" A drunkard is a sinner. "But I have been an unclean liver!" You are a sinner, then. "But I have such a hard heart!" Well, to have a hard heart is one of the greatest sins in the world. "But I am unbelieving!" Well, that is a sin too. You come in under the list of sinners, and I say that such Christ contemplated, and the two sentences we have already considered prove this to a demonstration. He contemplated such as you are when he came to save, for "he was numbered with transgressors," and "he bare"—not the virtues of many, not the merits of many, not the good works of many, but "the sin of many." So, if you have any sin, here is Christ the sin-bearer; and if you are a sinner, here is Christ, numbered with you. "Oh!" says one, "but what is faith? I want to

know at once." Faith, sinner, is to believe in Jesus, and to trust in Jesus now. Saving faith can sing this verse—

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one foul blot,
To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

It is as sinners, not as sensible sinners, not as repenting sinners, that Jesus died for us. Sinners as sinners, Jesus Christ has chosen, redeemed, and called; in fact, for them, and for only such, Jesus Christ came into the world.

III. Our third sentence tells us that JESUS INTERCEDES FOR SINNERS. "And made intercession for the transgressors."

He prays for his saints, but, dear friends, remember that by nature they are transgressors, and nothing more.

What does our text say? He intercedes for transgressors! There is a transgressor here this morning. He has been hearing the gospel for many years—for many years; and he has heard it preached faithfully too. He is growing grey now; but while his head is getting white his heart is black; he is an old hard-hearted reprobate, and by-and-bye, unless grace prevents—but I need not tell that story. What is that I hear? The feet of justice, slowly but surely coming. I hear a voice saying—"Lo, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" The woodman feels his axe; it is sharp and keen. "Now," says he, "I will lay to at this barren tree, and cut it down." But hark! There is one that maketh intercession for transgressors, hear him, hear him, "Spare it yet a little while, till I dig about it and dung it, and if it bear fruit *well*; but if not, after that thou shalt cut it down." You see there was nothing in that tree why he should plead for it, and there is nothing in you why he should plead for you, yet he does it. This very morning, perhaps, he is crying "Spare him yet a little while; let him hear the gospel again; let him be entreated once more; oh! let him have another sickness that it may make his conscience feel; let me have another endeavour with his hard heart; it may be, it may be that he will yield." O sinner, bless God that Jesus Christ pleads for you in that way.

But that done, he *pleads for their forgiveness*. They are nailing him to the cross; the wretches are driving iron through his hands; but even while they fasten him to the tree hear him—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, I spoke to a brother this week, whose heart all-conquering love touched. He had been a great blasphemer, and when we were talking together about the fact that Jesus Christ loved him even when he was cursing, I saw how it broke his heart; and it broke mine too, to think that I could rebel against Christ whilst he was loving me; that I could despise him while he was putting himself in my way in order to do me good. Oh! it is this that breaks a man's heart; to think that Christ should have been loving me, with the whole force of his soul, while I was despising him, and would have nothing to do with him. There is a man there who has been cursing, and swearing, and blaspheming, and the very man whom he has cursed has been crying "Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he does." O sinner, I would this might break thy heart, and bring thee to the Saviour.

Nor does he end there. He next prays *that those for whom he intercedes may be saved, and may have a new life given them*. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive." Every soul that is quickened by the Holy Spirit is so quickened as the result of his intercession for

transgressors. His prayer brings down the life, and dead sinners live. When they live he does not cease to pray for them, for by his intercession *they are preserved*. They are tempted and tried, but hear what he says. "Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy strength fail not." Yes, brethren, beloved, and this is the reason *why we are not condemned*, for our Apostle puts it—"Who is he that condemneth?" and the answer he gives is, "Christ hath died, yea, rather, hath risen again, who ever maketh intercession for us;" as if that intercession choked at once the advocate of hell, and delivered us from condemnation. And more, *our coming to glory* is the result of the pleading of Christ for transgressors. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

There are a great many sermons preached that have not the gospel in them, especially those sermons the drift of which is to tell the sinners "Go home and pray; go home and pray." That is very good advice, but it is not the gospel. The sinner might answer me, "How can I come before God as I am; I cannot plead before him, for I am a wretch undone; if I should stand in his presence he would drive me from him." Behold Jesus Christ maketh intercession for transgressors. It is a common saying in the world, that a man who pleads his own cause has a fool for his client, certainly it is so in heaven. But when Christ comes in, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, he takes up the brief, and now the adversary trembles, for no sooner does he find that the suit is put into the hands of him who is the advocate of his people than he knows that his case is lost, and that the sinner will go free. So, sinner, you are safe if he pleads for you. "Ah," say you, "but if he asks me what he should plead I have nothing to tell him." You know the counsellor goes into the cell, and he says to the prisoner—"Now, just tell me the case; what can I say in your favour?" The criminal replies, "Well, there is so-and-so, and so-and-so," and perhaps he is able to say "Why, sir, I am as innocent as a new-born babe of the whole affair, and I can prove an *alibi*, or I can do this or that." Very well; the advocate having ground to go upon, pleads the case in the court right confidently. But now I hear you say, "Ah, I cannot tell the Lord Jesus Christ what he is to plead, for I have nothing to plead; the fact is I am guilty, and thoroughly guilty too, and I deserve to be punished, and must be; I have nothing to plead." Now what does our blessed Advocate say? "Oh," saith he, "but I have the plea in myself;" and up he rises in the court of law, and when the accusation is read he puts in this to that accusation—"In the name of the sinner for whom I intercede, and with whom I am numbered, I plead absolution and forgiveness through punishment already borne." "How?" saith Justice. And he shows the nail-prints in his hands, and lays bare his side, and says, "I suffered for that sinner; I was punished with the sinner's punishment, and therefore I claim, as the reward of my passion and my agony, that the sinner should go his way." Do you not see that Christ is a precious pleader because he can appear for us, and what is more, he can find a plea for us. "Ah!" I hear you say, "but I have no means of getting such an advocate as that; I wish I had, but I have nothing to give him; if he asks any fees I have nothing; I do not deserve the love of Christ; I do not know why he should take up my cause; if he would I should be saved, but I cannot think he will, for I cannot hope to pay him." "Nay," says he, "but I will take up your cause freely, willingly, cheerfully, and I will make intercession for you, not because you deserve it, but because you need it; not because you are not a transgressor, but because you are." That very thing, sinner, that makes you think Christ will not look at you, is the very reason why he will. You are full of disease. "Ah!" say you, "the physician will never look at such an arm as that;" but because the ulcer is reeking, that is why he stops and says, "I will cure that." Your qualification is your disqualification, and what you think to be the reason why he never will look at you, is certainly the only reason you can plead why he

should. You are nothing; you are utterly lost; you have no merit; you have nothing unless the Lord Jesus Christ make prevalent, acceptable, and perpetual intercession for transgressors.

I come to a conclusion reluctantly; but I must say these few words. There are some of you that make very light of sinning. I pray you be reasonable, and think this matter over. It was no light thing for God to save a sinner, for the Son of God himself must be numbered with sinners, and smart and die for sinners, or else they could not be saved. Touch not the unclean thing; hate it. If it is deadly to a holy Christ, it must be damnable to you. Oh! pass it by, and loathe it as the Egyptians loathed the water of the river when it was turned to blood in their sight.

To you who make but little of Christ, there is this word: you know what sin means; I do not think you can ever make too much of sin, but I pray you do not make too little of Christ. To you who think you have no qualifications for Christ, I say this closing sentence: I do beseech you get rid of that foul, that legal, that soul-destroying idea that Christ wants any preparation by you or in you before you come to him. You may come to him now; nay, more, you are *commanded* to come to him now, just as you are. And to every man among you to-day, and to every woman and child, I preach this gospel in the name of Jesus Christ: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Trust him now—in your seat—standing in the aisles—crowded in these galleries—trust him now; God commands you. "This is *the* commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." As Peter said, so say I, "Repent and be converted, every one of you;" and as Paul said to the Philippian jailer, so say I, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." If you do not, this shall condemn you; not your sin, but your unbelief; for they that believe not are condemned already, Why, why are such condemned? Because they believe not. That is the accusation; that is the damning crime and curse. "Well," says one, "then if God commands me to trust Christ, though I certainly have no reason why I should, then I'll do it." Ah! soul, do it then. Can you do it? Can you trust him now? Is it a full trust? Are you leaning on your feelings? Give them up. Are you depending a little on what you mean to do? Give that up. Do you trust him wholly? Can you say, "His blessed wounds, his flowing blood, his perfect righteousness, on these I rest. I do trust him, wholly?" Are you half afraid to say you do? Do you think it is such a bold thing? Do it then; do a bold thing for once! Say, "Lord, I'll trust thee, and if thou cast me away, I'll still trust thee; I bless thee that thou canst save me, and that thou wilt save me." Can you say that? I say, have you believed in him? You are saved, then; you are not in a salvable state, but you are saved; not partly, but wholly saved; not some of your sins blotted out, but all; behold the whole list, and it is written at the bottom of them all: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." But I hear one say, "It is too good to be true!" Soul, wilt thou be lost through thinking little things of Christ? "Ah!" says another, "it is too simple; if this be the gospel, we shall have all the ragamuffins in the streets believing in Christ and being saved." And glory be to God if it be so! For my part I am never afraid of big sinners being saved. I would have every harlot, I would have every whoremonger and adulterer to be saved. I would not be afraid that they would go on in their sins if they believed in Christ. Oh! no; faith in Christ would change their nature; and it will change yours too; for this is salvation: to have the nature changed, to be made a new creature in Christ, and to be made holy. Come, soul, wilt thou trust him? I do not like you all to go away after crowding in here without getting that blessing. Some of you have come up to the Handel Festival; but here is better music if you trust Christ, for you shall hear the bells of heaven ringing, and all the music of the angels as they rejoice over you as a brother redeemed. Many of you have come up to see the Great Exhibition; but here is a greater wonder than that, if you came into this place this morning

in a state of nature, and go out in a state of grace, only to wait a little while, and then to reach a state of glory! Some of you have come up to see the great Cattle Show; but here is something better to see than ever was reared on English pasture; here is food for your souls; here is that whereof if a man eateth he shall live for ever; and here it is held out to you. Nothing can be plainer. Trust Christ and you are saved. Outside in the street there is a drinking-fountain. When you get there, if you are thirsty go to it; you will find no policeman there to send you away. No one will cry, "You must not drink because you do not wear a satin dress." "You must not drink because you wear a fustian jacket." No, no, go and drink; and when you have hold of the ladle and are putting it to your lips, if there should come a doubt—"I do not feel my thirst enough," still take a drink whether you do or not. So I say to you, Jesus Christ stands like a great flowing fountain in the corners of the street, and he inviteth every thirsty soul to come and drink. You need not stop and say, "Am I thirsty enough? Am I black enough?" You do want it whether you think you do or not. Come as you are; come as you are. Every fitness is legality; every preparation is a lie; every getting ready for Christ is coming the wrong way. You are only making yourselves worse while you think you are making yourselves better. You are like a boy at school who has made a little blot, and he gets out his knife to scratch it out, and makes it ten times worse than before. Leave the blots alone. Come as you are. If you are the blackest soul out of hell, trust Christ, and that act of trust shall make you clean. This seems a simple thing, and yet it is the hardest thing in the world to bring you to it; so hard a thing that all the preachers that ever preached cannot make a man believe in Christ. Though we put it as plainly as we can, and plead with you, you only go away and say, "It is too good to be true;" or else you despise it because it is so simple; for the gospel, like Christ, is despised and rejected of men, because it has no form and comeliness, and no beauty in it that they should desire it. Oh! may the Holy Ghost lay this home to you; may he make you willing in the day of his power. I hope he has; I trust he has, so that ere we go we may all join in singing this one verse, and then separate;—

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

Faith and Repentance Inseparable

A Sermon

(No. 460)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, July 13th, 1862, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Repent ye, and believe the gospel."—Mark 1:15

Our Lord Jesus Christ commences his ministry by announcing its leading commands. He cometh up from the wilderness newly anointed, like the bridegroom from his chamber; his love notes are repentance and faith. He cometh forth fully prepared for his office, having been in the desert, "tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin"; his loins are girded like a strong man to run a race. He preacheth with all the earnestness of a new zeal, combined with all the wisdom of a long preparation; in the beauty of holiness from the womb of morning he glittereth with the dew of his youth. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Messias speaketh in the greatness of his strength. He crieth unto the sons of men, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Let us give our ears to these words which, like their author, are full of grace and truth. Before us we have the sum and substance of Jesus Christ's whole teaching—the Alpha and Omega of his entire ministry; and coming from the lips of such an one, at such a time, with such peculiar power, let us give the most earnest heed, and may God help us to obey them from our inmost hearts.

I. I shall commence my remarking that *the gospel which Christ preached was, very plainly, a command*. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Our Lord does condescend to *reason*. Often his ministry graciously acted out the old text, "Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool." He does *persuade* men by telling and forcible arguments, which should lead them to seek the salvation of their souls. He does *invite* men, and oh, how lovingly he woos them to be wise. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He does *entreat* men; he condescendeth to become, as it were, a beggar to his own sinful creatures, beseeching them to come to him. Indeed, he maketh this to be the duty of his ministers, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Yet, remember, though he condescendeth to reason, to persuade, to invite, and to beseech, still his gospel hath in it all the dignity and force of a command; and if we would preach it in these days as Christ did, we must proclaim it as a command from God, attended with a divine sanction, and not to be neglected save at the infinite peril of the soul. When the feast was spread upon the table for the marriage-supper, there was an invitation, but it had all the obligation of a command, since those who rejected it were utterly destroyed as despisers of their king. When the builders reject Christ, he becomes a stone of stumbling to "the disobedient"; but how could they disobey if there were no command? The gospel contemplates, I say, invitations, entreaties, and beseechings, but it also takes the higher ground of authority. "Repent ye" is as much a command of God as "Thou shalt not steal." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" has as fully a divine authority as "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength." Think not, O men, that the gospel is a thing left to your option to choose it or not! Dream not, O sinners, that ye may despise the Word from heaven and incur no guilt! Think not that ye may neglect it and no ill consequences shall

follow! It is just this neglect and despising of yours which shall fill up the measure of your iniquity. It is this concerning which we cry aloud, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation!" God *commands* you to repent. The same God before whom Sinai was moved and was altogether on a smoke—that same God who proclaimed the law with sound of trumpet, with lightnings and with thunders, speaketh to us more gently, but still as divinely, through his only begotten Son, when he saith to us, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

Why is this, dear friends; why has the Lord made it a command to us to believe in Christ? There is a blessed reason. Many souls would never venture to believe at all if it were not made penal to refuse to do so. For this is the difficulty with many awakened sinners: may I believe? Have I a right to believe? Am I permitted to trust Christ? Now this question is put aside, once for all, and should never irritate a broken heart again. You are commanded by God to do it, therefore you may do it. Every creature under heaven is commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus, and bow the knee at his name; every creature, wherever the gospel comes, wherever the truth is preached, is commanded there and then to believe the gospel; and it is put in that shape, I say, least any conscience-stricken sinner should question whether he may do it. Surely, you *may* do what God commands you to do. You may know this in the devil's teeth—"I may do it; I am bidden to do it by him who hath authority, and I am threatened if I do not with eternal damnation from his presence, for 'he that believeth not shall be damned.'" This gives the sinner such a blessed permit, that whatever he may be or may not be, whatever he may have felt or may not have felt, he has a warrant which he may use whenever he is led to approach the cross. However benighted and darkened you may be, however hard-hearted and callous you may be, you have still a warrant to look to Jesus in the words, "Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth." He that commanded thee to believe will justify thee in believing; he cannot condemn thee for that which he himself bids thee do. But while there is this blessed reason for the gospel's being a command, there is yet another solemn and an awful one. It is that men may be without excuse in the day of judgment; that no man may say at the last, "Lord, I did not know that I might believe in Christ; Lord, heaven's gate was shut in my face; I was told that I might not come, that I was not the man." "Nay," saith the Lord, with tones of thunder, "the times of man's ignorance I winked at, but in the gospel I commanded all men everywhere to repent; I sent my Son, and then I sent my apostles, and afterwards my ministers, and I bade them all make this the burden of their cry, 'Repent and be converted everyone of you'; and as Peter preached at Pentecost, so bade I them preach to thee. I bade them warn, exhort, and invite with all affection, but also to command with all authority, compelling you to come in, and inasmuch as you did not come at my command, you have added sin to sin; you have added the suicide of your own soul to all your other iniquities; and now, inasmuch as you did reject my Son, you shall have the portion of unbelievers, for 'he that believeth not shall be damned.'" To all the nations of the earth, then, let us sound forth this decree from God. O men, Jehovah that made you, he who gives you the breath of your nostrils, he against whom you have offended, commands you this day to repent and believe the gospel. He gives his promise—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"; and he adds the solemn threatening—"He that believeth not shall be damned." I know some brethren will not like this, but that I cannot help. The slave of systems I will never be, for the Lord has loosed this iron bondage from my neck, and now I am the joyful servant of the truth which maketh free. Offend or please, as God shall help me, I will preach every truth as I learn it from the Word; and I know if there be anything written in the Bible at all it is written as with a sunbeam, that God in Christ commandeth men to repent, and believe the gospel. It is one of the saddest proofs of man's utter

depravity that he will not obey this command, but that he will despise Christ, and so make his doom worse than the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. Without the regenerating work of God the Holy Ghost, no man ever will be obedient to this command, but still it must be published for a witness against them if they reject it; and while publishing God's command with all simplicity, we may expect that he will divinely enforce it in the souls of those whom he has ordained unto eternal life.

II. While the gospel is a command, *it is a two-fold command explaining itself*. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

I know some very excellent brethren—would God there were more like them in zeal and love—who, in their zeal to preach up simple faith in Christ have felt a little difficulty about the matter of repentance; and I have known some of them who have tried to get over the difficulty by softening down the apparent hardness of the word repentance, by expounding it according to its more usual Greek equivalent, a word which occurs in the original of my text, and signifies "to change one's mind." Apparently they interpret repentance to be a somewhat slighter thing than we usually conceive it to be, a mere change of mind, in fact. Now, allow me to suggest to those dear brethren, that the Holy Ghost never preaches repentance as a trifle; and the change of mind or understanding of which the gospel speaks is a very deep and solemn work, and must not on any account be depreciated. Moreover, there is another word which is also used in the original Greek for repentance, not so often I admit, but still is used, which signifies "an after-care," a word which has in it something more of sorrow and anxiety, than that which signifies changing one's mind. There must be sorrow for sin and hatred of it in true repentance, or else I have read my Bible to little purpose. In very truth, I think there is no necessity for any other definition than that of the children's hymn—

"Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more."

To repent does mean a change of mind; but then it is a thorough change of the understanding and all that is in the mind, so that it includes an illumination, an illumination of the Holy Spirit; and I think it includes a discovery of iniquity and a hatred of it, without which there can hardly be a genuine repentance. We must not, I think, undervalue repentance. It is a blessed grace of God the Holy Spirit, and it is absolutely necessary unto salvation.

The command explains itself. We will take, first of all, *repentance*. It is quite certain that whatever the repentance here mentioned may be, it is a repentance perfectly consistent with faith; and therefore we get the explanation of what repentance must be, from its being connected with the next command, "Believe the gospel." Then, dear friends, we may be sure that that unbelief which *leads a man to think that his sin is too great for Christ to pardon it*, is not the repentance meant here. Many who truly repent are tempted to believe that they are too great sinners for Christ to pardon. That, however, is not part of their repentance; it is a sin, a very great and grievous sin, for it is undervaluing the merit of Christ's blood; it is a denial of the truthfulness of God's promise; it is a detracting from the grace and favour of God who sent the gospel. Such a persuasion you must labour to get rid of, for it came from Satan, and not from the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Ghost never did teach a man that his sins were too great to be forgiven, for that would be to make God the Holy Spirit to teach a lie. If any of you have a thought of that kind this morning, be rid of it; it cometh from the powers of darkness, and not from the Holy Ghost; and if some of you are troubled because

you never were haunted by that fear, be glad instead of being troubled. He can save you; be you as black as hell he can save you; and it is a wicked falsehood, and a high insult against the high majesty of divine love when you are tempted to believe that you are past the mercy of God. That is not repentance, but a foul sin against the infinite mercy of God.

Then, there is another spurious repentance which makes the sinner dwell *upon the consequences of his sin, rather than upon the sin itself, and so keeps him from believing*. I have known some sinners so distressed with fears of hell, and thoughts of death and of eternal judgment, that to use the words of one terrible preacher, "They have been shaken over the mouth of hell by their collar," and have felt the torments of the pit before they went thither. Dear friends, this is not repentance. Many a man has felt all that and has yet been lost. Look at many a dying man, tormented with remorse, who has had all its pangs and convictions, and yet has gone down to the grave without Christ and without hope. These things may come with repentance, but, they are not an essential part of it. That which is called law-work, in which the sinner is terrified with horrible thoughts that God's mercy is gone for ever, may be permitted by God for some special purpose, but it is not repentance; in fact, it may often be devilish rather than heavenly, for, as John Bunyan tells us, Diabolus doth often beat the great hell-drum in the ears of the men of Mansoul, to prevent their hearing the sweet trumpet of the gospel which proclaimeth pardon to them. I tell thee, sinner, any repentance that keeps thee from believing in Christ is a repentance that needs to be repented of; any repentance that makes thee think Christ will not save thee, goes beyond the truth and against the truth, and the sooner thou are rid of it the better. God deliver thee from it, for the repentance that will save thee is quite consistent with faith in Christ.

There is, again, a *false repentance which leads men to hardness of heart and despair*. We have known some seared as with a hot iron by burning remorse. They have said, "I have done much evil; there is no hope for me; I will not hear the Word any more." If they hear it it is nothing to them, their hearts are hard as adamant. If they could once get the thought that God would forgive them, their hearts would flow in rivers of repentance; but no; they feel a kind of regret that they did wrong, but yet they go on in it all the same, feeling that there is no hope, and that they may as well continue to live as they were wont to do, and get the pleasures of sin since they cannot, as they think, have the pleasures of grace. Now, that is no repentance. It is a fire which hardens, and not the Lord's fire which melts; it may be a hammer, but it is a hammer used to knit the particles of your soul together, and not to break the heart. If, dear friends, you have never been the subject of these terrors do not desire them. Thank God if you have been brought to Jesus any how, but long not for needless horrors. Jesus saves you, not by what you feel, but by that finished work, that blood and righteousness which God accepted on your behalf. Do remember that no repentance is worth having which is not perfectly consistent with faith in Christ. An old saint, on his sick-bed, once used this remarkable expression; "Lord, sink me low as hell in repentance; but"—and here is the beauty of it—"lift me high as heaven in faith." Now, the repentance that sinks a man low as hell is of no use except there is faith also that lifts him as high as heaven, and the two are perfectly consistent one with the other. A man may loathe and detest himself, and all the while he may know that Christ is able to save, and has saved him. In fact, this is how true Christians live; they repent as bitterly as for sin as if they knew they should be damned for it; but they rejoice as much in Christ as if sin were nothing at all. Oh, how blessed it is to know where these two lines meet, the stripping of repentance, and the clothing of faith! The repentance that ejects sin as an evil tenant, and the faith which admits Christ to be the sole master of the heart; the repentance which purges the soul from dead works,

and the faith that fills the soul with living works; the repentance which pulls down, and the faith which builds up; the repentance that scatters stones, and the faith which puts stones together; the repentance which ordains a time to weep, and the faith that gives a time to dance—these two things together make up the work of grace within, whereby men's souls are saved. Be it, then laid down as a great truth, most plainly written in our text, that the repentance we ought to preach is one connected with faith, and thus we may preach repentance and faith together without any difficulty whatever.

Having shown you what this repentance is not, *let us dwell for a moment on what it is.* The repentance which is here commanded is the result of faith; it is born at the same time with faith—they are twins, and to say which is the elder-born passes my knowledge. It is a great mystery; faith is before repentance in some of its acts, and repentance before faith in another view of it; the fact being that they come into the soul together. Now, a repentance which makes me weep and abhor my past life because of the love of Christ which has pardoned it, is the right repentance. When I can say, "My sin is washed away by Jesu's blood," and then repent because I so sinned as to make it necessary that Christ should die—that dove-eyed repentance which looks at his bleeding wounds, and feels that her heart must bleed because she wounded Christ—that broken heart that breaks because Christ was nailed to the cross for it—that is the repentance which bringeth us salvation.

Again, the repentance which makes us avoid present sin because of the love of God who died for us, this also is saving repentance. If I avoid sin to-day because I am afraid of being lost if I commit it, I have not the repentance of a child of God; but when I avoid it and seek to lead a holy life because Christ loved me and gave himself up for me, and because I am not my own, but am bought with a price, this is the work of the Spirit of God.

And again, that change of mind, that after-carefulness which leads me to resolve that in future I will live like Jesus, and will not live unto the lusts of the flesh, because he hath redeemed me, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with his own precious blood—that is the repentance which will save me, and the repentance he asks of me. O ye nations of the earth, he asks not the repentance of Mount Sinai, while ye do fear and shake because his lightnings are abroad; but he asks you to weep and wail because *of him*; to look on *him* whom you have pierced, and to mourn for him as a man mourneth for his only son; he bids you remember that you nailed the Saviour to the tree, and asks that this argument may make you hate the murderous sins which fastened the Saviour there, and put the Lord of glory to an ignominious and an accursed death. This is the only repentance we have to preach; not law and terrors; not despair; not driving men to self-murder—this is the terror of the world which worketh death; but godly sorrow is a sorrow unto salvation though Jesus Christ our Lord.

This brings me to the second half of the command, which is, "*Believe the gospel.*" Faith means trust in Christ. Now, I must again remark that some have preached this trust in Christ so well and so fully, that I can admire their faithfulness and bless God for them; yet there is a difficulty and a danger; it may be that in preaching simple trust in Christ as being the way of salvation, that they omit to remind the sinner that no faith can be genuine but such as is perfectly consistent with repentance for past sin; for my text seems to me to put it thus: no repentance is true but that which consorts with faith; no faith is true but that which is linked with a hearty and sincere repentance on account of past sin. So then, dear friends, those people who have a faith which allows them to think lightly of past sin, have the faith of devils, and not the faith of God's elect. Those who say, "Oh, as for the past, that is nothing; Jesus Christ has washed all that away"; and can talk about all the crimes

of their youth, and the iniquitous of their riper years, as if they were mere trifles, and never think of shedding a tear; never feel their souls ready to burst because they should have been such great offenders—such men who can trifle with the past, and even fight their battles o'er again when their passions are too cold for new rebellions—I say that such who think sin a trifle and have never sorrowed on account of it, may know that their faith is not genuine. Such men as have a faith which allows them to live carelessly in the present who say, "Well, I am saved by a simple faith"; and then sit on the ale-bench with the drunkard, or stand at the bar with the spirit-drinker, or go into worldly company and enjoy the carnal pleasures and the lusts of the flesh, such men are liars; they have not the faith which will save the soul. They have a deceitful hypocrisy; they have not the faith which will bring them to heaven.

And then, there be some other people who have a faith which leads them to no hatred of sin. They do not look upon sin in others with any kind of shame. It is true they would not do as others do, but then they can laugh at what others commit. They take pleasure in the vices of others; laugh at their profane jests, and smile at their loose speeches. They do not flee from sin as from a serpent, nor detest it as the murderer of their best friend. No, they dally with it; they make excuses for it; they commit in private what in public they condemn. They call grave offences slight faults and little defalcations; and in business they wink at departures from uprightness, and consider them to be mere matters of trade; the fact being that they have a faith which will sit down arm-in-arm with sin, and eat and drink at the same table with unrighteousness. Oh! if any of you have such a faith as this, I pray God to turn it out bag and baggage. It is of no good to you; the sooner you are cleaned out of it the better for you, for when this sandy foundation shall all be washed away, perhaps you may then begin to build upon the rock. My dear friends, I would be very faithful with your souls, and would lay the lancet at each man's heart. What is your repentance? Have you a repentance that leads you to look out of self to Christ, and to Christ only? On the other hand, have you that faith which leads you to true repentance; to hate the very thought of sin; so that the dearest idol you have known, whatever it may be, you desire to tear from its throne that you may worship Christ, and Christ only? Be assured of this, that nothing short of this will be of any use to you at the last. A repentance and a faith of any other sort may do to please you now, as children are pleased with fancies; but when you get on a death-bed, and see the reality of things, you will be compelled to say that they are a falsehood and a refuge of lies. You will find that you have been daubed with untempered mortar; that you have said, "Peace, peace," to yourselves, when there was no peace. Again, I say, in the words of Christ, "Repent and believe the gospel." Trust Christ to save you, and lament that you need to be saved, and mourn because this need of yours has put the Saviour to open shame, to frightful sufferings, and to a terrible death.

III. But we must pass on to a third remark. *These commands of Christ are of the most reasonable character.*

Is it an unreasonable thing to demand of a man that he should *repent*? You have a person who has offended you; you are ready to forgive him; do you think it is at all exacting or overbearing if you ask of him an apology; if you merely ask him, as the very least thing he can do, to acknowledge that he has done wrong? "No," say you, "I should think I showed my kindness in accepting rather than any harshness in demanding an apology from him." So God, against whom we have rebelled, who is our liege sovereign and monarch, seeth it to be inconsistent with the dignity of his kingship to absolve an offender who expreseth no contrition; and I say again, is this a harsh, exacting, unreasonable command? Doth God in this mode act like Solomon, who made the taxes of his people

heavy? Rather doth he not ask of you that which your heart, if it were in a right state, would be but too willing to give, only too thankful that the Lord in his grace has said, "He that confesseth his sin shall find mercy"? Why, dear friends, do you expect to be saved while you are in your sins? Are you to be allowed to love your iniquities, and yet go to heaven? What, you think to have poison in your veins, and yet be healthy? What, man, keep the thief in doors, and yet be acquitted of dishonesty? Be stained, and yet be thought spotless? Harbour the disease and yet be in health? Ridiculous! Absurd! Repentance is founded on the necessity of things. The demand for a change of heart is absolutely necessary; it is but a reasonable service. O that men were reasonable, and they would repent; it is because they are not reasonable that it needs the Holy Spirit to teach their reason right reason before they will repent and believe the gospel.

And then, again, *believing*: is that an unreasonable thing to ask of you? For a creature to believe its Creator is but a duty; altogether apart from the promise of salvation, I say, God has a right to demand of the creature that he has made, that he should believe what he tells him. And what is it he asks you to believe? Anything hideous, contradictory, irrational? It may be above reason, but it is not contrary to reason. He asks you to believe that through the blood of Jesus Christ, he can still be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. He asks you to trust in Christ to save you. Can you expect that he will save you if you will not trust him? Have you really the hardihood to think that he will carry you to heaven while all the while you declare he cannot do it? Do you think it consistent with the dignity of a Saviour to save you while you say, "I do not believe thou art a Saviour, and I will not trust thee"? Is it consistent with his dignity for him to save you, and suffer you to remain an unbelieving sinner, doubting his grace, mistrusting his love, slandering his character, doubting the efficacy of his blood, and of his plea? Why, man, it is the most reasonable thing in the world that he should demand of thee that thou shouldst believe in Christ. And this he doth demand of thee this morning. "Repent and believe the gospel." O friends, O friends, how sad, how sad is the state of man's soul when he will not do this! We may preach to you, but you never will repent and believe the gospel. We may lay God's command, like an axe, to the root of the tree, but, reasonable as these commands are, you will still refuse to give God his due; you will go on in your sins; you will not come unto him that you may have life; and it is here the Spirit of God must come in to work in the souls of the elect to make them willing in the day of his power. But oh! in God's name I warn you that, if, after hearing this command, you do, as I know you will do, without his Spirit, continue to refuse obedience to so reasonable a gospel, you shall find at the last it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you; for had the things which are preached in London been proclaimed in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and in ashes. Woe unto you, inhabitants of London! Woe unto you, subjects of the British Empire! for if the truths which have been declared in your streets had been preached to Tyre and Sidon, they would have continued even unto this day.

IV. But still, to pass on, I have yet a fourth remark to make, and that is, *this is a command which demands immediate obedience*. I do not know how it is, let us preach as we may, we cannot lead others to think that there is any great alarm, that there is any reason why they should think about their souls *now*. Last night there was a review on Wimbledon Common, and living not very far away from it, I could hear in one perpetual roll the cracks of the rifles and the thunder of cannon. One remarked to me, "Supposing there really were war there, we should not sit quite so comfortably in our room with our window open, listening to all this noise." No; and so when people come to chapel, they hear a sermon about repentance and faith; they listen to it. "What do you think of it?"

"Oh—very well." But suppose it were real; suppose they believed it to be real, would they sit quite so comfortably? Would they be quite so easy? Ah, no! But you do not think it is real. You do not think that the God who made you actually asks of you this day that you should repent and believe. Yes, sirs, but *it is real*, and it is your procrastination, it is your self-confidence that is the sham, the bubble that is soon to burst. God's demand is the solemn reality, and if you could but hear it as it should be heard you would escape from your lives and flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you in the gospel, and you would do this *to-day*. This is the command of Christ, I say, *to-day*. *To-day is God's time*. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation." "To-day," the gospel always cries, for if it tolerated sin a single day, it were an unholy gospel. If the gospel told men to repent of sin to-morrow, it would give them an allowance to continue in it to-day, and that would indeed be to pander to men's lusts. But the gospel maketh a clean sweep of sin, and demandeth of man that he should throw down the weapons of *his* rebellion *now*. Down with them, man! every one of them. Down, sir, down with them, and down with them *now!* You must not keep one of them; throw them down at once! The gospel challengeth him that he believe in Jesus *now*. So long as thou continuest in unbelief thou continuest in sin, and art increasing thy sin; and to give thee leave to be an unbeliever for an hour, were to pander to thy lusts; therefore it demandeth of thee faith, and faith *now*, for this is God's time, and the time which holiness must demand of a sinner. Besides, sinner, *it is thy time*. This is the only time thou canst call thine own. To-morrow! Is there such a thing? In what calendar is it written save in the almanack of the fool? To-morrow! Oh, how hast thou ruined multitudes! "To-morrow," say men; but like the hind-wheel of a chariot, they are always near to the front-wheel, always near to their duty; they still go on, and on, but never get one whit the nearer, for, travel as they may, to-morrow is still a little beyond them—but a little, and so they never come to Christ at all. This is how they speak, as an ancient poet said—

"I will to-morrow, that I will, I will be sure to do it';
 To-morrow comes, to-morrow goes, And still thou art 'to do it';
 Thus, then, repentance is deferred from one day to another,
 Until the day of death is one, And judgment is the other."

O sons of men, always *to be* blessed, *to be* obedient, but never obedient, when will ye learn to be wise? This is your only time; it is God's time, *and this is the best time*. You will never find it easier to repent than now; you will never find it easier to believe than now. It is impossible *now* except the Spirit of God be with you; it will be as impossible to-morrow; but if now you would believe and repent, the Spirit of God is in the gospel which I preach; and while I cry out to thee in God's name, "Repent and believe," he that bade me command you thus to do gives power with the command, that even as Christ spake to the waves and said, "Be still," and they were still, and to the winds, "Be calm," and they were quiet, so when we speak to your proud heart it yields because of the grace that accompanies the word, and you repent and believe the gospel. So may it be, and may the message of this morning gather out the elect, and make them willing in the day of God's power.

But now, lastly, this command, while it has an immediate power, has also a *continual force*. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," is advice to the young beginner, and it is advice to the old grey-headed Christian, for this is our life all the way through—"Repent ye, and believe the gospel." St. Anselm, who *was* a saint—and that is more than many of them were who were called so—St. Anselm once cried out "Oh! sinner that I have been, I will spend all the rest of my life in repenting

of my whole life!" And Rowland Hill, whom I think I might call St. Rowland, when he was near death, said he had one regret, and that was that a dear friend who had lived with him for sixty years would have to leave him at the gate of heaven. "That dear friend," said he, "is repentance; repentance has been with me all my life, and I think I shall drop a tear," said the good man, "as I go through the gates, to think that I can repent no more." Repentance is the daily and hourly duty of a man who believes in Christ; and as we walk by faith from the wicket gate to the celestial city, so our right-hand companion all the journey through must be repentance. Why, dear friend, the Christian man, after he is saved, repents more than he ever did before, for now he repents not merely of overt deeds, but even of imaginations. He will take himself to task at night, and chide himself because he had tolerated one foul thought; because he has looked on vanity, though perhaps the heart had gone no further than the look of lust; because the thought of evil has flitted through the mind—for all this he will vex himself before God; and were it not that he still continues to believe the gospel, one foul imagination would be such a plague and sting to him, that he would have no peace and rest. When temptation comes to him the good man finds the use of repentance, for having hated sin and fled from it of old, he has ceased to be what he once was. One of the ancient fathers, we are told, had, before his conversion, lived with an ill woman, and some little time after, she accosted him as usual. Knowing how likely he was to fall into sin he ran away with all his might, and she ran after him, crying, "Wherefore runnest thou away? It is I." He answered, "I run away because I am not I; I am a new man." Now, it is just that, "I am not I," which keeps the Christian out of sin; that hating of the former "I," that repenting of the old sin that maketh him run from evil, abhor it, and look not upon it, lest by his eyes he should be led into sin. Dear friend, the more the Christian man knows of Christ's love, the more will he hate himself to think that he has sinned against such love. Every doctrine of the gospel will make a Christian man repent. Election, for instance. "How could I sin," saith he. "I that was God's favourite, chosen of him from before the foundation of the world?" Final perseverance will make him repent. "How can I sin," says he, "that am loved so much and kept so surely? How can I be so villainous as to sin against everlasting mercy?" Take any doctrine you please, the Christian will make it a fount for sacred woe; and there are times when his faith in Christ will be so strong that his repentance will burst its bonds, and will cry with George Herbert—

"Oh, who will give me tears?
 Come, all ye springs,
 Ye clouds and rain dwell in my eyes,
 My grief hath need of all the wat'ry things
 That nature hath produc'd. Let ev'ry vein
 Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
 My weary weeping eyes; too dry for me,
 Unless they set new conduits, new supplies
 To bear them out, and with my state agree."

And all this is because he murdered Christ; because his sin nailed the Saviour to the tree; and therefore he weepeth and mourneth even to his life's end. Sinning, repenting, and believing—these are three things that will keep with us till we die. Sinning will stop at the river Jordan; repentance will die triumphing over the dead body of sin; and faith itself, though perhaps it may cross the stream, will cease to be so needful as it has been here, for there we shall see even as we are seen, and shall know even as we are known.

I send you away when I have once again solemnly declared my Master's will to you this morning, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Here are some of you come from foreign countries, and many of you are from our provincial towns in England; you came here, perhaps, to hear the preacher of whom many a strange thing has been said. Well and good, and may stranger things still be said if they will but bring men under the sound of the Word that they may be blessed. Now, this I have to say to you this morning: In that great day when a congregation ten thousand times larger than this shall be assembled, and on the great white throne the Judge shall sit, there will be not a man, or woman, or child, who is here this morning, able to make excuse and say, "I did not hear the gospel; I did not know what I must do to be saved!" You have heard it: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." That is, trust Christ; believe that he is able and willing to save you. But there is something better. In that great day, I say, there will be some of you present—oh! let us hope all of us—who will be able to say, "Thank God that ever I yielded up the weapons of my proud rebellion by repentance; thank God that I looked to Christ, and took him to be my Saviour from first to last; for here am I, a monument of grace, a sinner saved by blood, to praise him while time and eternity shall last!" God grant that we may meet each other at the last with joy and not with grief! I will be a swift witness against you to condemn you if you believe not this gospel; but if you repent and believe, then we shall praise that grace which turned our hearts, and so gave us the repentance which led us to trust Christ, and the faith which is the effectual gift of the Holy Spirit. What shall I say more unto you? Wherefore, wherefore will you reject this? If I have spoken to you of fables, of fictions, of dreams, then turn on your heel and reject my discourse. If I have spoken in my own name, who am I that you should care one whit for me? But if I have preached that which Christ preached, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," I charge you by the living God, I charge you by the world's Redeemer, I charge you by cross of Calvary, and by the blood which stained the dust at Golgotha, obey this divine message and you shall have eternal life; but refuse it, and on your heads be your blood for ever and ever!

Never! Never! Never! Never! Never!

A Sermon

(No. 477)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, October 26th, 1862, by

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."—Hebrews 13:5.

WHAT POWER RESIDES in "Thus saith the Lord!" The man who can grasp by faith, "He hath said," has an all-conquering weapon in his hand. What doubt will not be slain by this two-edged sword? What fear is that which shall not fall smitten with a deadly wound before this arrow from the bow of God's covenant? Will not the distresses of life and the pangs of death, will not the corruptions within and the temptations without, will not the trials from above and the temptations from beneath all seem but light afflictions when we can hide ourselves behind the bulwark of "He hath said?" Whether for delight in our quietude, or for strength in our conflict, "He hath said" must be our daily resort.

Hence, let us learn, my brethren, the extreme value of *searching the Scriptures*. There may be a promise in the Word which would exactly fit your case, but you may not know of it, and therefore miss its comfort. You are like prisoners in a dungeon, and there may be one key in the bunch which would unlock the door, and you might be free; but if you will not look for it you may remain a prisoner still, though liberty is near at hand. There may be a potent medicine in the great pharmacopia of Scripture, and you may still remain sick, though there is the precise remedy that would meet your disease, unless you will examine and search the Scriptures to discover what "He hath said." Should we not, beside reading Scripture, *store our memories richly with the promises of God*? We can recollect the sayings of great men; we treasure up the verses of renowned poets; ought we not to be profound in our knowledge of the words of God? The Scriptures should be the classics of a Christian, and as our orators quote Homer, or Virgil, or Horace, when they would clinch a point, so we should be able to quote the promises of God when we would solve a difficulty or overthrow a doubt. "He hath said," is the foundation of all riches and the fountain of all comfort, let it dwell in you richly as "a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." And, oh, my brethren, *how diligently should we test the Scriptures!* Besides searching them by reading, and treasuring them by memory, we should test them by experience, and so often as a promise is proven to be true we should make a mark against it, and note that we also can say, as did one of old, "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me." "Wait on the Lord," said Isaiah, and then he added "Wait, *I say*, on the Lord," as if his own experience led him to echo the voice of God to his hearers. Test the promise, take God's banknote to the counter, and mark if it be cashed. Grasp the lever, which he ordains to lift your trials, and try if it possesses real power. Cast this divine tree into the bitter waters of your Marah, and learn how it will sweeten them. Take this salt, and throw it into the turbid waters, and witness if they be not made sweet, as were the waters of old by the prophet Elisha. Taste and see that the Lord is good, for there is no want to them that fear him.

The Apostles, you will notice, like their Master, were always very ready at quotations. Though they were inspired men, and could have used fresh words, yet they preferred, as an example to us,

to quote "He hath said;" let us do the same, for, though the words of ministers may be sweet, the words of God are sweeter; and though original thoughts may have the novelty of freshness, yet the ancient words of God have the ring, and the weight, and the value of old and precious coins, and they shall not be found wanting in the day when we shall use them.

It seems from our text that "He hath said" is not only useful to chase away doubts, fears, difficulties, and devils, but that it also yieldeth nourishment to all our graces. You perceive that when the apostle would make us contented, he says, "Be content with such things as ye have, for *he hath said*;" and when he would make us bold and courageous, he puts it, "*He* hath said, therefore, we may boldly say, God is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me." When the apostle would nourish faith, he does it by quoting from Scripture the examples of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, of Gideon, of Barak, and of Jephthah. When he would nourish our patience, he says, "Ye remember the patience of Job;" or if it be our prayerfulness, he says, "Elias was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed and prevailed." "*He hath said*" is food for every grace as well as death for every sin. Here you have nourishment for that which is good, and poison for that which is evil. Search ye, then, the Scriptures, for so shall ye grow healthy, strong, and vigorous in the divine life.

We turn at once, with great pleasure, to the wonderful words of our text, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." I have no doubt you are aware that our translation does not convey the whole force of the original, and that it would hardly be possible in English to give the full weight of the Greek. We might render it, "He hath said, I will never, never leave thee; I will never, never, never forsake thee;" for, though that would be not a literal, but rather a free rendering, yet, as there are five negatives in the Greek, we do not know how to give their force in any other way. Two negatives nullify each other in our language; but here, in the Greek, they intensify the meaning following one after another, as I suppose David's five stones out of the brook would have done if the first had not been enough to make the giant reel. The verse we sung just now is a very good rendering of the original—

"The soul that on Jesus hath lean'd for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."

Here you have the five negatives very well placed, and the force of the Greek, as nearly as possible, given.

In trying to expound this five-fold assurance, this quintessence of consolation, we shall have to draw your attention, first of all, to *an awful condition*, or what is negated; secondly, to *a gracious promise*, or what is positively guaranteed; next, we shall observe *notable occasions* or times when this promise was uttered; a few words upon certain *sweet confirmations* which prove the text to be true; and then, in the fifth place, *necessary conclusions* which flow from the words of the promise.

I. First of all, then, AN AWFUL CONDITION—lost and FORSAKEN of God! I am quite certain I shall fail in attempting to describe this state of mind. I have thought of it, dreamed of it, and felt it in such feeble measure as a child of God can feel it, but how to describe it I know not.

1. *Forsaking* implies *an utter loneliness*. Put a traveler in a vast howling wilderness, where for many a league there is no trace of man—no foot-step of traveler. The solitary wretch cries for help—the hollow echo of the rocks is his only reply. No bird in the air; not even a prowling jackal

in the waste; not an insect in the sunbeam to keep him company; not even a solitary blade of grass to remind him of God! Yet, even there he is not alone: for yon bare rocks prove a God, and the hot sand beneath his feet, and the blazing sun above his head, all witness to a present Deity. But what would be the loneliness of a man forsaken of God! No migration could be so awful as this, for he says, "If I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea *thou art there.*" Such a state were worse than hell, for David says, "If I make my bed in hell *thou art there.*" Loneliness is a feeling which none of us delight in. Solitude may have some charms, but they who are forced to be her captives have not discovered them. A transient solitude may give pleasure; to be alone, utterly alone, is terrible; to be alone, *without God*, is such an emphasis of loneliness, that I defy the lip even of a damned spirit to express the horror and anguish that must be concentrated in it. There is far more than you and I dream of in the language of our Lord Jesus, when he says, "I have trodden the wine-press *alone.*" *Alone!* You remember he once said, "Ye shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." There is no agony in that sentence, but what must be his grief when he says—"I have trodden the wine-press *alone!*" "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is the cry of human nature in its uttermost dismay. Thank God, you and I by this promise are taught that we never shall know the desperate loneliness of being forsaken of God; yet, this is what it would be if he should forsake us!

2. Mingling with this mournful solitude is a sense of *utter helplessness*. Power belongeth unto God; withdraw the Lord, and the strong men must utterly fail. The archangel without God passes away and is not; the everlasting hills do bow, and the solid pillars of the earth are dissolved. Without God our dust returneth to the earth; without God our spirit mourneth like David, "I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind; I am like a broken vessel." Christ knew what this was when he said, "I am a worm, and no man." He was so utterly broken, so emptied of all power, that as he hung with dislocated limbs upon the cross, he cried, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; thou hast brought me into the dust of death." No broken reed or smoking flax can be so feeble as a soul forsaken of God. Our state would be as deplorably destitute as that of Ezekiel's infant, deserted and cast into the open field with none to swaddle and none to care for it, left utterly to perish and to die,—such should we be if we could be forsaken of God! Glorious are those negatives which shut us in from all fear of this calamity.

3. To be forsaken of God implies *utter friendlessness*. A thousand times let Jehovah be blessed that very few of us have ever known what it is to be friendless! There have been times in the experience of some of us when we felt that we stood without a friend in the particular spot which we then occupied, for we had a grief which we could not entrust to any other heart. Every man who is eminently useful in the Church will know seasons when as the champion of Israel he must go forth alone. This, however, is compensated by stronger faith, and the moral grandeur of solitary heroism. But what must it be to be some poor wretch whose parents have long since been buried; who has lost his most distant relatives; who, passing along the street remembers the name of one who was once his father's friend, knocks at the door, and is repulsed; recollects another—and this is his last hope—one he played with in his infancy—stands at that door asking for charity and is bidden to go his way, and paces the cold November streets while the rain is pouring down, feeling to his utter dismay that no friend breathes for him? Should he return to his own parish it would be like going to his own dungeon, and if he enters the workhouse no eye there will flash sympathy upon him! He is utterly friendless and alone! I believe that many a suicide has been produced by the want of a friend. As long as a man feels he has some one loving him, he has something worth

living for; but when the last friend is gone and we feel that we are floating on a raft far out at sea, with not a sail in sight, and we cry, "Welcome death!" Our Lord and Master was brought to this state, and knew what it was to be forsaken, for he had no friends left. "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." "All the disciples forsook him and fled." Brethren, many saints have lost all their friends, but have bravely borne the trial, for turning their eye to heaven, they have felt that though without friends they were still befriended. They have heard the voice of Jesus say, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come unto you;" and, made strong by Divine friendship, they have felt that they were not utterly bereaved. But to be forsaken *of God!* Oh, may you and I never know it! To be without a friend in heaven; to look to that throne of glory and to see the blackness of darkness there; to turn to mercy and receive a frown; to fly to love and receive a rebuke; to turn to God and find that his ear is heavy that he will not hear, and his hand restrained that he will not help—oh! this is terror, terror heaped on terror, to be thus forsaken!

4. Loneliness, helplessness, friendlessness—add these together, and then put the next—*hopelessness*. A man forsaken of men may still entertain some hope. But let him be forsaken of God, and then hope hath failed; the last window is shut; not a ray of light now streams into the thick Egyptian darkness of his mind. Life is death; death is damnation—damnation in its lowest deeps. Let him look to men, and they are broken reeds; let him turn to angels, and they are avengers; let him look to death, and even the tomb affords no refuge. Look where he will, blank, black despair seizes hold upon him. Our blessed Lord knew this when lover and friend had been put far from him, and his acquaintance into darkness. It was only his transcendent faith which enabled him after all to say "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." The black shadow of this utter hopelessness went over him when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and he "sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground."

5. To make up this five-fold forsaking, against which we have the five negatives, let us add to all this loneliness, helplessness, friendlessness, and hopelessness, a sense of *unutterable agony*. We speak of agony, but to feel it is a very different thing. Misery and despair—the *wrestling* of these with the spirit till the spirit is trodden down, and crushed, and broken, and chooses strangling rather than life; a horrible sense of every evil having made one's heart its den; a consciousness that we are the target for all God's arrows; that *all* God's waves and billows have gone over us; that he hath forgotten to be gracious; that he will be merciful to us no more; that he hath in anger shut up the bowels of his compassion—this is a part of being forsaken of God which only lost spirits in hell can know! Our unbelief sometimes lets us get a glimpse of what this would be, but it is only a glimpse, only a glimpse; let us thank God that we are delivered from all fear of this tremendous evil. By five wounds doth our Redeemer slay our unbelief.

Brethren, if God should leave us, mark the result: I picture to myself the very best state of one forsaken of God—it is uncertainty and chance. I would rather be an atom, which hath God with it, predestinating its track and forcing it onward according to his own will, than I would be an archangel left to my own choice, to do as I would and to act at I please, without the control of God; for an archangel, left without God, would soon miss his way, and fall to hell; or he would melt away, and drop and die; but the tiny atom, having God with it, would fulfill its predestinated course; it would be ever in a sure track, and throughout eternity would have as much potence in it as at its first creation. I cannot think why some people are so fond of free-will. I believe free-will is the delight of sinners, but that God's will is the glory of saints. There is nothing I desire more to get rid of than

my own will, and to be absorbed into the will and purpose of my Lord. To do according to the will of Him who is most good, most true, most wise, most mighty, seems to me to be heaven. Let others choose the dignity of independence, I crave the glory of being wholly dead in Christ, and only alive in him. Oh! dear friends, if the Lord should forsake us, to say the best of it, our course would be uncertain, and, ere long it would end in nothingness. We know, further, that if God should forsake the best saint alive, that man would immediately fall into sin. He now stands securely on yonder lofty pinnacle, but his brain would reel and he would fall, if secret hands did not uphold him. He now picks his steps carefully; take away grace from him and he would roll in the mire, and wallow in it like other men. Let the godly be forsaken of his God, and he would go from bad to worse, till his conscience, now so tender, would be seared as with a hot iron. Next he would ripen into an atheist or a blasphemer, and he would come to his dying bed foaming at the mouth with rage; would come before the bar of his Maker with a curse upon his lip; and in eternity, left and forsaken of God, he would sink to hell with the condemned, ay, and among the damned he would have the worst place, lower than the lowest, finding in the lowest depths a lower depth, finding in the wrath of God something more dreadful than the ordinary wrath which falleth upon common sinners!

When we thus describe being forsaken of God, is it not satisfactory to the highest degree to remember that we have God's word for it five times over, "I will never, never leave thee; I will never, never, never forsake thee?" I know those who caricature Calvinism say we teach that let a man live as he likes, yet if God be with him, he will be safe at the last. We teach no such thing, and our adversaries know better. They know that our doctrines are invulnerable if they will state them correctly, and that the only way in which they can attack us is to slander us and to misrepresent what we teach. Nay, verily, we say not so, but we say that where God begins the good work, the man will never live as he likes, or if he does, he will like to live as God would have him live; that where God begins a good work he carries it on; that man is never forsaken of God, nor does he forsake God, but is kept even to the end.

II. We have before us now, in the second place, A GRACIOUS PROMISE, or what is positively guaranteed.

What is guaranteed in this promise? Beloved, herein doth God give to his people everything. "*I will never leave thee.*" Then no attribute of God can cease to be engaged for us. Is he mighty? He will show himself strong on the behalf of them that trust him. Is HE love? Then with everlasting lovingkindness will he have mercy upon us. Whatever attributes may compose the character of Deity every one of them to its fullest extent shall be engaged on our side. Moreover, whatsoever God hath, whether it be in the lowest hades or in the highest heaven, whatever can be contained in infinity or can be held within the circumference of eternity, whatever, in fine, can be in him who filleth all things, and yet is greater than all things, shall be with his people for ever, since "He hath said, *I will never leave you, nor forsake you.*" How one might enlarge here, but I forbear; ye yourselves know that to sum up "all things" is a task beyond all human might.

III. More fully, however, to expound this promise, I would remind you of the five OCCASIONS in which it occurs in Scripture. The number five runs all through our subject. The sense and spirit of the text are to be found in innumerable places, and possibly there may be some other passages which approximate so very nearly to our text, that you might say they also are repetitions, but I think there are five which may clearly take the priority.

1. One of the first instances is to be found in Genesis 28:15. "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not

leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Here we have this promise in the case of a *man of trials*. More than either Abraham or Isaac, Jacob was the son of tribulation. He was now flying away from his father's house, leaving the over-fondness of a mother's attachment, abhorred by his elder brother, who sought his blood. He lies down to sleep, with a stone for his pillow, with the hedges for his curtains, with the earth for his bed, and the heavens for his canopy; and as he sleeps thus friendless, solitary, and alone, God saith to him "I will never, never leave thee." Mark his after career. He is guided to Padan-aram; God, his guide, leaves him not. At Padan-aram Laban cheats him, wickedly and wrongfully cheats him in many ways; but God doth not leave him, and he is more than a match for the thievish Laban. He flies at last with his wives and children; Laban, in hot haste pursues him, but the Lord does not leave him; Mizpah's Mount bears witness that God can stop the pursuer, and change the foe into a friend. Esau comes against him; let Jabbok testify to Jacob's wrestlings, and through the power of him who never did forsake his servant, Esau kisses his brother, whom once he thought to slay. Anon Jacob dwells in tents and booths at Succoth; he journeys up and down throughout the land, and his sons treacherously slay the Shechemites. Then the nations round about seek to avenge their death, but the Lord again interposes, and Jacob is delivered. Poor Jacob is bereaved of his sons. He cries—"Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me." But they are not against him; God has not left him, for he has not yet done everything that he had spoken to him of. The old man goes into Egypt; his lips are refreshed while he kisses the cheeks of his favourite Joseph, and until the last, when he gathers up his feet in the bed and sings of that coming Shiloh and the scepter that should not depart from Judah, good old Jacob proves that in six troubles God is with his people, and in seven he doth not forsake them; that even to hoar hairs he is the same, and until old age he doth carry them. You Jacobs, full of affliction, you tried and troubled heirs of heaven, he hath said to you, each one of you—oh! believe him!—I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

2. The next instance in which we find this same promise is in Deuteronomy 31:6. Here we find it spoken, not so much to individuals as to the whole body collectively. Moses said unto the people of Judah, by the Word of God, "Be strong, and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Beloved, we may take this promise as being spoken to God's Church, *as a Church*. These people were to fight the accursed nations of Canaan, to drive out the giants, and the men who had chariots of iron, but the Lord said he would never leave them, nor did he, till from Dan to Beersheba the favored race possessed the promised land, and the tribes went up to Jerusalem with the voice of joyful song. Now, as the Church of God, let us remember that the land lieth before us, and we are called of God to go up and possess it. I would it were my lot yet more and more, like Joshua, to lead you from one place to another, smiting the enemies of the Lord and extending the kingdom of Messias! Let us undertake what we may, we shall never fail. Let us, by faith, dare great things, and we shall do great things. Let us venture upon notable exploits which shall seem fanatical to reason and absurd to men of prudence, for he hath said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." If the Church of God would but know that her Lord cannot leave her, she might attempt greater things than she has ever done, and the success of her attempts would be most certain and sure. God never can forsake a praying people, nor cast off a laboring Church; he must bless us even to the end.

3. The third occasion upon which this promise was made is in Joshua 1:5, where the Lord says to Joshua, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was

with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. "Now this is *a minister's text*. If we be called to lead the people, to bear the brunt of the fight, the burden and heat of the day, let us treasure up this as our precious consolation, he will not fail us nor forsake us. It needs not that I should tell you that it is not every man who can stand first in the ranks, and that, albeit there is no small share of honor given by God to such a man, yet there is a bitterness in his lot which no other men can know. There are times when, if it were not for faith, we would give up the ghost, and, were not the Master with us, we would turn our back and fly, like Jonah, unto Nineveh. But if any of you be called to occupy prominent positions in God's Church, bind this about your arm and it shall make you strong; He hath said to you, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Go, in this thy might; the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.

4. On the next occasion, this same promise was given by David in his last moments to his son Solomon, 1 Chronicles 28:20. David was speaking of what he himself by experience had proved to be true, and he declares—"Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord." Some Christians are placed where they need much *prudence, discretion, and wisdom*. You may take this for your promise. The Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon; she put to him many difficult questions, but God did not leave him, nor forsake him, and he was able to answer them all. As judge over Israel, many knotty points were brought before him; you remember the child and the harlots, and how wisely he decided the case. The building of the temple was a very mighty work—the like of which the earth had never seen, but, by wisdom given to him, the stones were fashioned, and laid one upon another, till at last the top stone was brought out with shoutings. You shall do the same, O man of business, though yours be a very responsible situation. You shall finish your course, O careful worker, though there are many eyes that watch for your halting. You shall do the same, sister, though you need to have seven eyes rather than two, you shall hear the voice of God saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Thou shalt never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.

5. Once more, and perhaps this fifth occasion may be the most comforting to the most of you, Isaiah 41:17, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." You may be brought to this state to-day. Your soul may *need Christ*, but you may not be able to find him. You may feel that without the mercy which comes from the atoning blood you are lost. You may have gone to works and ceremonies, to prayings and doings, to alms-givings and to experiences, and have found them all dried wells, and now you can hardly pray, for your tongue cleaves to the roof of your mouth for thirst. Now in your worst condition, brought to the lowest state into which a creature ever can be cast, Christ will not forsake you, he will appear for your help.

Surely, one of these five occasions must suit you, and let me here remind you that whatever God has said to any one saint he has said to all. When he opens a well for one man it is that all may drink. When the manna falls, it is not only for those in the wilderness, but we by faith do eat the manna still. No promise is of private interpretation. When God openeth a granary-door to give out food, there may be some one starving man who is the occasion of its being opened, but all the hungry besides may come and feed too. Whether he gave the word to Abraham or to Moses matters not; he has given it to thee as one of the covenanted seed. There is not a high blessing too lofty for thee; nor a wide mercy too extensive for thee. Lift up now thine eyes to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, for all this is thine. Climb to Pisgah's top, and view the utmost limit of

the divine promise, for the land is all thine own. There is not a brook of living water of which thou mayest not drink. If the land floweth with milk and honey, eat the honey and drink the milk. The fattest of the kine, yea, and the sweetest of the wines, let all be thine, for there is no denial of any one of them to any saint. Be thou bold to believe, for he hath said, "I will never leave *thee*, nor forsake *thee*." To put everything in one, there is nothing you can want, there is nothing you can ask for, there is nothing you can need in time or in eternity, there is nothing living, nothing dying, there is nothing in this world, nothing in the next world, there is nothing now, nothing at the resurrection-morning, nothing in heaven that is not contained in this text—"I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

IV. I shall give five blows to drive home the nail while I speak upon THE SWEET CONFIRMATIONS of this most precious promise.

1. Let me remind you that the Lord will not and cannot leave his people, because of *his relationship to them*. He is your *Father*; will your Father leave you? Has he not said—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Would you, being evil, leave your child to perish? Never, never! Remember, Christ is your *husband*. Would you, a husband, neglect your wife? Is it not a shame to a man, unless he nourisheth and cherisheth her even as his own body, and will Christ become one of these ill husbands? Hath he not said—"I hate putting away," and will he ever put thee away? Remember, thou art *part of his body*. No man yet ever hated his own flesh. Thou mayest be but as a little finger, but will he leave his finger to rot, to perish, to starve? Thou mayest be the least honorable of all the members, but is it not written that upon these he bestoweth abundant honor, and so our uncomely parts have abundant comeliness? If he be father, if he be husband, if he be head, if he be all-in-all, how can he leave thee? Think not so hardly of thy God.

2. Then, next, *his honor* binds him never to forsake thee. When we see a house half-built and left in ruins, we say, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Shall this be said of thy God, that he began to save thee and could not bring thee to perfection? Is it possible that he will break his word, and so stain his truth? Shall men be able to cast a slur upon his power, his wisdom, his love, his faithfulness? No! thank God, no! "I give," saith he "unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." If thou shouldst perish, believer, hell would ring with diabolical laughter against the character of God; and if ever one whom Jesus undertook to save shouldst perish, then the demons of the pit would point the finger of scorn for ever against a defeated Christ, against a God that undertook but went not through.

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep."

3. And if that be not enough, wilt thou remember besides this that *the past* all goes to prove that he will not forsake thee. Thou hast been in deep waters; hast thou been drowned? Thou hast walked through the fires; hast thou been burned? Thou hast had six troubles; hath he forsaken thee? Thou hast gone down to the roots of the mountains, and the weeds have been wrapped about thy head; hath he not brought thee up again? Thou hast borne great and sore troubles; but hath he not delivered thee? Say, when did he leave thee? Testify against him; if thou hast found him forgetful, then doubt him. If thou hast found him unworthy of thy confidence, then disown him, but not till

then. The past is vocal with a thousand songs of gratitude, and every note therein proveth by an indisputable logic that he will not forsake his people.

4. And if that be not enough ask thy father and *the saints that have gone before*. Did ever any perish trusting in Christ? I have heard that some whom Jehovah loved have fallen from grace, and have been lost. I have heard lips of ministers thus prostitute themselves to falsehood, but I know that such never was the case. He keepeth all his saints; not one of them hath perished; they are in his hand, and have hitherto been preserved. David mourneth, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me;" yet, he crieth, "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." Jonah laments, "The earth with her bars was about me for ever;" and yet, ere long he says, "Salvation is of the Lord." Ye glorified ones above, through much tribulation ye have inherited the kingdom, and wearing your white robes, ye smile from your thrones of glory and say to us, "Doubt not the Lord, neither distrust him, he hath not forsaken his people nor cast off his chosen."

5. Beloved friends, there is *no reason why he should* cast us off. Can you adduce any reason why he should cast you away? Is it your poverty, your nakedness, your peril, the danger of your life? In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. Do you say it is your sins? Then I answer sin can never be a cause why God should cast away his people, for they were full of sin when he at first embraced their persons, and espoused their cause. That would have been a cause why he never should have loved them, but having loved them when they were dead in trespasses and sins, their sin can never be a reason for leaving them. Besides, the Apostle says, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,"—and sin is one of the things present, and I fear it is one of the things to come—"nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." O child of God, there is no fear of your misusing this precious truth. The base-born professor of godliness may say, "I will sin, for God will not cast me away," but you will not, ye heirs of heaven; rather you will bind this about your heart, and say "Now will I love him who having loved his own, loves them even unto the end." Glory be to God,

"Midst all my sin, and care, and woe,
His Spirit will not let me go."

Go, ye slaves that fear the curse of God, and sweat and toil; we are his sons, and we know he cannot expel us from his heart. May God deliver us from the infamous bondage of the doctrine which makes men fear that God may be unfaithful, that Christ may divorce his own spouse, may let the members of his own body perish; that he may die for them and yet not save them. If there be any truth taught us in Scripture, it is that the children of God cannot perish. If this Book teaches anything whatever, if it be not all a fiction from beginning to end, it teaches in a hundred places that "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of his love cannot depart from us saith the Lord that hath mercy upon us."

V. And now, fifthly, the *SUITABLE CONCLUSIONS* to be drawn from this doctrine.

1. One of the first is *contentment*. The apostle says, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content, for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Ishmael, the son of Hagar, had his water in a bottle; and he might have laughed at Isaac because Isaac had no bottle, but then here was the difference between them—Isaac lived by the well. Now some of us have little enough in this world; we have no bottle of water, no stock in hand; but then we live by the well, and that is

better still. To depend upon the daily providence of a faithful God, is better than to be worth twenty thousand pounds a year.

2. *Courage* is the next lesson. Let us boldly say, "God is my helper, why should I fear what man can do unto me." A child of God afraid! Why, there is nothing more contrary to his nature. If any would persecute you, look them in the face and bear it cheerfully. If they laugh at you, let them laugh; you can laugh when they shall howl. If any despise you, be content to be despised by fools, and to be misunderstood by madmen. It were hard if the world loved us; it is an easy thing if the world hateth us. We are so used to be spoken of as altogether vile in our motives and selfish in our objects; so used to hear our adversaries misconstrue our best words and pull our sentences to pieces, that if they were to do anything else but howl, we should think ourselves unworthy. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth."

3. Then next, *we ought to cast off our despondency*. Some of you came here this morning as black as the weather. Just now we saw some gleams of sunshine peering through those side windows, until our friends hastened to draw the blinds, to shut out the dazzling brightness from their eyes; I hope, however, you will not shut out the rays of holy joy which break in upon you now. No, since he has said, "I will never leave nor forsake thee" leave your troubles in your pews, and bear away a song.

4. And then, my brethren, here is argument for *the greatest possible delight*. How we ought to rejoice with joy unspeakable if He will never leave us! Mere songs are not enough; shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.

5. And, lastly, what ground there is here *for faith!* Let us lean upon our God with all our weight. Let us throw ourselves upon his faithfulness as we do upon our beds, bringing all our weariness to his dear rest. Now, right on our God let us cast the burdens of our bodies, and our souls, for he hath said, "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee."

Oh, I wish this promise belonged to you all! I would give my right hand if it could! But some of you must not touch it; it does not belong to some of you, for it is the exclusive property of the man who trusts in Christ. "Oh!" saith one, "then I will trust in Christ." Do it, soul, do it; and if thou trustest in him he will never leave thee. Black as thou art, he will wash thee; he will never leave thee. Wicked as thou art, he will make thee holy, he will never leave thee. Though thou hast nought that should win his love, he will press thee to his bosom; he will never leave thee. Living or dying, in time or in eternity, he will never forsake thee, but will surely bring thee to his right hand, and say, "Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me."

May God seal these five negatives upon our memories and hearts for Christ's sake. Amen.

Christ—Perfect Through Sufferings

A Sermon

(No. 478)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, November 2nd, 1862, by

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Hebrews 2:10.

BELIEVING THAT GOD foreknoweth all things, we cannot but come to the conclusion that he foreknow the fall, and that it was but an incident in the great method by which he would glorify himself. Foreknowing the fall, and fore-ordaining and predestinating the plan by which he would rescue his chosen out of the ruins thereof, he was pleased to make that plan a manifestation of all his attributes, and, to a very great extent, a declaration of his wisdom. You do not find in the method of salvation a single tinge of folly. The Greeks may call it folly, but they are fools themselves. The gospel is the highest refinement of wisdom, ay, of divine wisdom, and we cannot help perceiving that not only in its main features, but in its little points, in the details and the minutiae, the wisdom of God is most clearly to be seen. Just as in the making of the tabernacle in the wilderness not a single loop or tache was left to human chance or judgment, so in the great scheme of salvation, not a single fragment was left to the human will or to the folly of the flesh. It appears to be a law of the divine action that everything *must* be according to the fitness and necessity involved in perfect wisdom—"It behoved that Christ should suffer;" and in our text we find, "*It became him* from whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, that he should make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." It seemed to be but the order of natural fitness and congruity, in accordance with the nature and character of God, that the plan of salvation should be just what it is. Oh! how careful should we be who have to preach it never to alter it in the slightest degree. How should we lift our prayers to heaven that God would give us a clear understanding, first, of what we have to teach, and then a clear method of teaching what we have learned, so that no mistake may be made here, for a mistake here would mar that express image of God which shines in the gospel, and prevent our hearers from seeing the beautiful fitness and proportion which are so adapted to reveal the perfect character of God. We say the plan *must* be what it is; it could not be otherwise so as to be in keeping with the divine character; and, therefore, it is imperative upon us that we make no alteration in it, no, not of a word, lest we should hear the Apostle's anathema hissing through the air like a thunderbolt from God—"If we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than that ye have received let him be accursed!"

Our text invites us to the consideration of three particulars: first, *that Christ is a perfect Savior*; secondly, *that he became so through suffering*; and thirdly, *that his being made perfect through suffering will ennoble and dignify the whole work of grace*. "It became him"—it seemed fitting—that in bringing many sons unto glory he should make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

I. To begin, then, first of all with the joyous thought, so well known to you all, but so necessary still to be repeated, that THE LORD JESUS IS A PERFECT SAVIOR.

1. For, first, *he is perfectly adapted for the work of saving. The singular constitution of his nature* adapts him to his office. He is *God*. It was necessary that he should be so. Who but God could sustain the enormous weight of human guilt? What but Divinity was equal to bear the awful load of wrath which was to be carried upon his shoulders? What knowledge but Omniscience could understand all the evil, and what power but Omnipotence could undo that evil? That Christ is God must ever be a theme for grateful admiration to his people. They who reject the divinity of Christ can have but a poor foundation to rest upon; the fickle sand, would seem to be more stable than the basis of their hope. It is enough for one man to work out his own obedience; more than enough for one man to bear wrath for himself; how, then, could he do it for others, and for those countless multitudes whose ruin was to be retrieved? But, beloved, we know that had he only been God yet still he would not have been fitted for a perfect Savior, unless he had become *man*. Man had sinned; man must suffer. It was man in whom God's purposes had been for a while defeated; it must be in man that God must triumph over his great enemy. He *must* take upon himself the seed of Abraham, that he may stand in their room and stead, and become their federal head. An angel, we believe, could not have suffered on the tree; it would not have been possible for an angelic nature to have borne those agonies which the wrath of God demanded as an expiation for guilt. But when we see the Lord Jesus before us, being verily the Son of Man, and as certainly the Son of God, we perceive that now Job's desire is granted; we have a daysman that can lay his hand on both, and touch humanity in its weakness, and divinity in its strength; can make a ladder between earth and heaven; can bridge the distance which separates fallen manhood from the perfection of the eternal God. No nature but one so complex as that of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, would have been perfectly adapted for the work of salvation.

And as he was adapted in his nature, so, beloved, it is very clear to us that he was also adapted by his *experience*. A physician should have some acquaintance with disease; how shall he know the remedy if he be ignorant of the malady. Our Savior knew all because "he took our infirmities and he bare our sicknesses. He was tempted in all points, like as we are." He looked not at sin from the distance of heaven but he walked, and lived in the midst of it. He did not pass hurriedly through the world as one might hastily walk through an hospital without clearly understanding the disease, but he lived his more than thirty years in the very center of it, seeing sin in all its shapes; yes, seeing it in shapes that you and I have not yet seen. He saw it in demoniac forms, for hell was let loose for a season, that the combat might be the more terrible and the victory the more glorious. He saw sin carried to its most aggravated extent, when it crucified God himself, and nailed Jesus, the heir of heaven, to the accursed tree. He understood the disease; he was no empiric; he had studied the whole case through; deceitful as the human heart is, Jesus knew it; fickle as it is in its various appearances—Protean as it is in its constantly varying shapes, Christ knew and understood it all. His life-long walking of the hospital of human nature had taught him the disease. He knew the *subjects, too, upon whom to operate*. He knew man, and what was in man; yes, better than the most skilled surgeon can know by experiment. He knew by experience. He himself took our infirmities and bare our sorrows. He was himself the patient, himself the medicine. He took upon himself the nature of the race he came to save, and so every feeling made him perfect in his work; every pang instructed him; every throb of anguish made him wise, and rendered him the more accomplished to work out the purposes of God in the bringing of the many sons unto glory. If you will add to his perfect experience *his marvellous character*, you will see how completely adapted he was to the work. For a Savior, we need one who is full of love, whose love will make him firm to his purpose,

whose love will constrain him to yoke every power and talent that he has to the great work. We want one with zeal so flaming, that it will eat him up; of courage so indomitable, that he will face every adversary rather than forego his end; we want one, at the same time, who will blend with this brass of courage the gold of meekness and of gentleness; we want one who will be determined to deal fearlessly with his adversaries, who will put on zeal as a cloak, and will deal tenderly and compassionately with the disease of sin-sick men, such an one we have in Christ. No man can read the character of Christ with any sort of understanding without saying, "That is *the man* I want as my friend." The argument which Christ used was a very powerful one—"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." Why? "*For I am meek and lowly in heart.*" The character of Christ qualifies him to be the world's Savior, and there is something in his character, when properly understood, which is so attractive, that we may well say—

"His worth if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would love him too."

If we had to make a Savior ourselves, and it were left to a parliament of the wisest senators of the race to form an ideal personage who should just meet man's case, if the Divine One had lent us his own wisdom for the occasion, we could only have desired just such a person as Christ is. In character, we should have needed just such traits of nature and of spirit as we see in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. We think, therefore, we may safely say to every unconverted man, Christ is adapted to be a Savior to you. We know that the saints, without our saying it, will respond, "Ay, and he is just fitted to be a Savior to us." Man, yet God; bone of our bone, and yet counting it no robbery to be equal with God; sufferer like ourselves, bearer of all the ills of manhood, and yet, unlike us, free from sin, holy, harmless, undefiled: qualified in all respects to undertake and accomplish the great work; Jesus, thou art a perfect Savior to us.

2. Furthermore, as Christ is thus perfectly adapted, *so he is perfectly able to be a Savior*. He is a perfect Savior by reason of ability. He is now able to meet *all the needs* of sinners. That need is very great. The sinner needs *everything*. The beggar at the door of Christ, asks not for crumbs or groats, but needs all that Christ can give. Nothing short of all-sufficiency can ever meet the wants of a poor son of Adam fallen by sin. Christ Jesus hath all fullness dwelling in himself. "More than all in Christ we find:" pardon in his blood; justification in his righteousness; wisdom in his teaching; sanctification in his Spirit. He is the God of all grace to us. Deep as our miseries and boundless as our sins may be, the mines of his unfathomable love, his grace, and his power, exceed them still. Send a spirit throughout all nations to hunt up the most abject of all races; discover, at last, a tribe of men degenerated as low as the beasts; select out of these the vilest, one who has been a cannibal; bring before us one lost to all sense of morality, one who has put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, light for darkness and darkness for light; let that man be red with murder, let him be black with lust; let villainies infest his heart as innumerable and detestable as the frogs of Egypt's plague—yet Christ is able to meet that man's case. It is impossible for us to produce an exaggeration of the work of sin and the devil, which Christ shall not be able to overtop by the plenitude of his power. "He is able to save *unto the uttermost* them that come unto God by him." That divine word which made heaven and earth, is able to make a new creature in Christ Jesus; and that power which never can be exhausted, which after making ten thousand times ten thousand worlds could make as many more is all in Christ, and is linked with the virtue of his merit and the prevalence of his blood, and therefore he hath all power in heaven and in earth to save souls. As he has this power to meet all needs, so he can meet all need *in all cases*. There has never been brought to Christ a

man whom he could not heal. If born blind, a touch of his finger has given sight; if lame he has made him leap like a hart; ay, and though dead, the voice of Christ has made Lazarus come forth from his tomb. Some troubled consciences think their case is not in the list of possible cures, let us assure them it must be. I would like to know who is the vilest sinner, for if I knew him I should feel delighted to behold him, since I should see a platform upon which my Lord's grace might stand to be the more gloriously resplendent in the eyes of men. Are you the vilest of the vile this morning? Do you feel so? Does Satan say you are so? Then I pray you do my Master the honor to believe that he is still able to meet your case, and that he can save even you. Though you think yourselves the ends of the earth, the very ravellings of the garment of manhood, yet "look unto him and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for he is God, and besides him there is none else." As he can meet all cases, so he can meet all cases *at all times*. One villainy of hell is to tell sinners that it is too late. While the lamp holds out to burn, the vilest sinner that returns shall find mercy in him. At the eleventh hour he saved the thief; let not this be a reason for your procrastination—that were ungrateful let it, however, be a cause for hope—that were reasonable. He is able to save you *now*. Now, at this hour, at this very moment, if thou dost trust him thou art saved. If now, without an hour's delay to retire to thy chamber, without even five minutes' time elapsing in which to prepare thy soul for him, if now thou canst believe that Christ can save thee, he will do it, do it at this moment. His cures are instantaneous; a word, and it is done. Swift as the lightning's flash is the accomplishment of his purpose of grace. As the lightning flasheth from the west even to the east, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be at his last great advent; and so is it in his marvellous advent into the hearts of sinners whom he ordains to save. Able to meet all cases, able to meet them at this very hour is Christ. Sinner, Christ is perfectly able to save thee, and to save thee perfectly. I know the will and wit of man want to be doing something to begin salvation. Oh, how wicked is this! Christ is Alpha, why would you take his place and be an Alpha to yourselves? I have had this week two cases in which I have had to hold a solemn argument with troubled souls about this matter. Oh! the "ifs" and "buts" they put; the "perhaps," and "and," and "peradventures," and "Oh, I don't feel this," and "I don't feel that!" Oh, that wicked questioning of Christ! While talking with them, endeavoring to comfort them, and I hope not unsuccessfully, I was led to feel in my own mind what an awful crime it is to doubt God, to doubt Him that speaks from above, to doubt Him when he hangs bleeding on the tree. While it seemed to me to be such a hard thing to bring a sinner to trust Christ, yet it did seem, on the other hand, such a sin of sins, such a master-piece of iniquity that we do not trust Christ at once. Here is the plan of salvation—trust Christ and he will save you. But they say "I do not feel enough;" or else "I have been such a sinner;" or else "I cannot feel the joy I want;" or else "I cannot pray as I would." Then I put it to them. Do you trust Christ? "Yes," they will say, "I do trust Christ, and yet am not saved." Now, this makes God a liar, for he says, "He that believeth in him is not condemned, and he that believeth on him hath everlasting life." When a soul professes to trust Christ, and yet says "I am afraid he will not save me," what is this but telling the Eternal God to his face that he is false? Can you suppose a grosser infamy than this? Oh! that men were wise, that they would take God at his word, and believe that Christ is a perfect Savior, not asking them to help him at the first, but able to begin with them just where they are, and to lift them up from all the hardness of their hearts and the blackness of their souls to the very gates of heaven. He is a perfect Savior, soul, and a perfect Savior for you. You know the old story of the brazen serpent. There may have been some very wise persons who, when the brazen serpent was lifted up, would say "I cannot look there and be healed, for, you see, I do not feel the venom

in my veins as my next door neighbor does." The man is bitten, and his veins are swelling, but he says he does not feel the pain so acutely as his neighbor, and he does not feel the joy of those who are healed, or else he would look. "If some angel would come," he says, "and tell me that the brazen serpent was set up on purpose for me, and that I am ordained to be healed by it, then I would look." There is a poor ignorant man over there who asks no questions but does just as he is told. Moses cries "Look, look, ye dying; look and live!" and, asking no questions about what he has felt, or what he was, or what he should feel, yonder poor soul just looks and the deed is done; the flush of health runs through him, and he is restored, while the questioner, the wise man in his oval conceit, too wise indeed, to do as he is told, perishes through his own folly, a victim to the serpents, but yet more a victim to his own conceit. Christ is a perfect Savior to begin with you, and he will also be a perfect Savior to carry on the work. He will never want your help; he is a perfect Savior to finish the work. He will bring you at last to his right-hand, and throned with him in light you shall bless and praise the name of God that He provided a perfect Savior for men.

3. Once more, let me remind you *that Christ is a perfectly successful Savior*. I mean by this that, in one sense, *he has already finished the work of salvation*. All that has to be done to save a soul Christ has done already. There is no more ransom to be paid; to the last drachma he hath counted down the price. There is no more righteousness to be wrought out; to the last stitch he has finished the garment. There is nothing to be done to reconcile God to sinners; he hath reconciled us unto God by his blood. There is nothing wanted to clear the way to the mercy-seat; we have a new and living way through the veil that was rent, even the body of Christ. There is no need of any preparation for our reception on the part of God. "It is finished," was the voice from Calvary; it meant what it said, *"It is finished."* Christ hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. And, as he has been successful in doing all the work for us, so, *in every case where that work has been applied, perfect success has followed*. Produce a single case where an application has been made to Christ without success. Find a single soul in whom Christ has commenced his work, and then left it. You do hear of some who fall from grace: produce them. We are told of some who are children of God to-day, and children of the devil to-morrow: produce them. We are told that whom once he loves he may leave; produce those whom he has ever left. Let them be seen. Hold them up to the gaze of men and devils—the patients in whom Christ's medicine did work awhile, but failed to produce a lasting cure. Heaven were clothed in sackcloth if such a discovery were made, for if he hath failed to keep on earth, why not in heaven? Hell were echoing with infernal laughter if one such instance were found, for where were the honor of God's word and promise? We challenge you, ye princes of darkness, and ye who make the vast assembly of the damped in hell, we challenge you to produce in all your ranks a single case of one who trusted in Christ that he would deliver him and yet Christ cast him away; or one in whom the new spirit was infused and regeneration wrought, and who yet, after all fell and perished like the rest. Lift up your eyes to heaven; innumerable as the stars are the spirits redeemed by blood; so many as they are, they are all witnesses to the fact that Christ is a perfect Savior; that he is no professor who does not perform, for he has carried them all there, and as we gaze upon them are can say, "Thou *hast* redeemed them unto God by thy blood;" thou canst save, and perfectly save, O Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I have thus dwelt upon the perfect adaptation, the perfect ability, and the perfect success of Christ, our text tells us *that it became him for whom are all things that he should give us such a Savior*. "For whom are all things," says the Apostle; that is, all things are made for his glory.

Now, it could not have been for God's glory to give us an imperfect Savior; to send us one who would mock us with hopes which could not be fulfilled. It would have been a tantalizing of human hope, which I do not hesitate to pronounce an awful cruelty, if any but a complete and perfect Savior had been presented to us. If it had been partly works and partly grace, there had been no grace in it. If it had been needful for us to do something to make Christ's atonement efficacious, it would have been no atonement for us; we must have gone down to the pit of hell with this as an aggravation, that a God who professed to be a God of mercy had offered us a religion of which we could not avail ourselves; a hope which did but delude us, and make our darkness the blacker. I want to know what some of my brethren in the ministry, who preach such very high doctrine, do with their God's character. They are told to preach the gospel to every creature, but they very wisely do not do it, because they feel that the gospel they preach is not a gospel suitable to every creature; so they neglect their Master's mandate, and single out a few. I bless my Master that I have an available gospel, one that is available to you this morning, for "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," and I hold that it were inconsistent with the character of him "for whom are all things," and that it were derogatory to his honor if he should have sent to you a salvation that would not meet your case; if he should have sent me to preach a gospel to you which could not completely save. But, glory be to God, the salvation which is here preached, the salvation taught in this Book, brings all to you, and asks nothing from you.

Moreover, Paul calls our God—"him by whom are all things." It would be inconsistent with the character of him by whom are all things if he had sent a part-Savior; for us to do part ourselves, and for Christ to do the rest. Look at the sun. God wills for the sun to light the earth; doth he ask the earth's darkness to contribute to the light? Doth he question night, and ask it whether it has not in its sombre shades something which it may contribute to the brightness of noon? No, my brethren, up rises the sun in the morning, like a giant to run his race, and the earth is made bright. And shall God turn to the dark sinner, and ask him whether there is anything in him that may contribute to eternal light? No; up rises the face of Jesus, like the Sun of Righteousness, with healing beneath his wings, and darkness is, at his coming, light. See ye, too, the showers. When the earth is thirsty and cracking, doth the Lord say unto the clouds, "Wait ye until the earth can help ye, and can minister unto its own fertility?" Nay, verily, but the wind bloweth and the clouds cover the sky, and upon the thirsty earth the refreshing showers come down. So is it with Christ; waiting not for man, and tarrying not for the Son of Man; asking nothing from us, he giveth us of his own rich grace, and is a complete and perfect Savior.

Thus much, then, upon our first head; I would we had more time for our second; but we will pass to it at once.

II. CHRIST WAS MADE A PERFECT SAVIOR THROUGH SUFFERING.

He was not made perfect in character by his suffering, for he always was perfect—perfect God, perfect man; but he was made officially perfect, perfect as the captain of our salvation through his sufferings, and that in four ways.

By his sufferings he became perfect as a Savior *from having offered a complete expiation for sin*. Sin could not have been put away by holiness. The best performance of an unsuffering being could not have removed the guilt of man. Suffering was absolutely necessary, for suffering was the penalty of sin. "In the day thou eatest thereof," said God to Adam, "thou shalt surely die." Die then he must. Nothing short of death could meet the case. Christ must go to the cross; he must suffer there; ay, and he must bow his head and give up the ghost, or else no atonement for sin had

been possible. The curse came upon us as the result of sin. "Curseth is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Now had Christ been never so perfect, yet had he never suffered he never could have taken our curse. "Cursed is every one that hangeth on the tree," but without the tree, without the cross, Christ had not been our substitute, and all he did could have been of no sort of use to us. Being crucified he became accursed; being crucified he died, and thus he could make perfect expiation for sin. Sin demanded punishment; punishment must consist of loss and of pain; Christ lost everything, even to the stripping of his garment; his glory was taken from him; they made nothing of him; they spat in his face; they bowed the knee, and mocked him with bitter irony. There must be pain too, and he endured it; in his body there were the wounds and the fever which the wounds produced, and in his soul there was an exceeding heaviness even unto death, and an agony which no tongue can tell, for we have no words in which to speak of it. We believe that this agony was commensurate with the agonies of the lost in hell; not the same agony, but an equivalent for it; and remember, not the equivalent for the agony of one, but an equivalent for the hells of all that innumerable host whose sins he bore, condensed into one black draught to be drained in a few hours; the miseries of an eternity without an end, miseries caused by a God infinitely angry because of an awful rebellion, and these miseries multiplied by the millions for whom the man Christ Jesus stood as covenant head. What a draught was that, men and brethren! Well might it stagger even him! And yet he drained that cup, drained it to its utmost dregs not a drop was left. For thee, my soul, no flames of hell; for Christ the Paschal-lamb has been roasted in that fire. For thee, my soul, no torments of the damned, for Christ hath been condemned in thy stead. For thee, my spirit, no desertion of thy God, for He was forsaken of God for thee. 'Tis done, 'tis finished, and by thy sufferings, Jesus, thou hast become perfect as the expiation of thy people's sins. Do, my brethren, remember that your sins are perfectly expiated. Do not let them trouble you as to punishment; the punishment has gone. Sins cannot lie in two places at one time; they were put on Christ, and they cannot be on you. In fact, your sins are not to be found; the scapegoat has gone, and your sins will never be found again. Your sins, if they were searched for, could not be discovered, nor by the piercing eye of God can a single blemish be found in you. So far as the punishment of the law is concerned it is finished, and Christ is a perfect Savior.

Again, if Christ had not suffered he could not have been perfect as a Savior, *because he could not have brought in a perfect righteousness*. It is not enough to expiate sin. God requires of man perfect obedience. If man would be in heaven he must be perfectly obedient. Christ, as he took away our guilt, has supplied us with a matchless righteousness. His works are our works; his doings are, by imputation, our doings. But a part of obedience is a patient endurance of God's will. Patience is no mean part of the full obedience of a sincere soul. Christ must therefore suffer hunger, and cold, and nakedness throughout life, that he may be capable of the virtue of patience. An obedience even unto death is now the only perfect form of obedience. The man who would keep the law of God perfectly must not start back even at martyrdom. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," would now require death to consummate it. It was not possible for the Master to have made the robe, woven from the top throughout without seam, unless the scarlet thread of crucifixion had run along its edge. But now, my soul, Christ is thy perfect Savior, for he presents thee with a perfect righteousness. There is nothing more to do. Neither my living nor my dying can make my righteousness more complete. No doing, no labouring, no denying, no suffering, are needed to finish that which Christ began. "It is finished." Put on thy robe, O Christian; walk ever in it; let it be thy wedding-dress. Angels admire thee; God himself

accepts thee; coming into his wedding-feast he sees thee with this garment on, and he asks thee not how thou comest hither, but bids thee sit down and feast for ever, for thou art such as even He can keep company with in his glory.

Yet, thirdly, it was necessary that Christ should suffer to make him a perfect Savior *so far as his sympathy goes*. After sin is washed away, and righteousness imputed, we yet want a friend, for we are in a land of troubles and of sorrows. Now, if Christ had not suffered he could not have been a faithful high-priest, made like unto his brethren. We should never have had that sweet text—"He was tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin," if he had not suffered. But now he knows all shapes of suffering. It is not possible that even out of the thousands now in this house there should be one heart whose case Christ cannot meet.

"In every pang that rends the heart

The man of sorrows had a part."

Disease, sickness of body, poverty, need, friendlessness, hopelessness, desertion—he knows all these. You cannot cast human suffering into any shape that is new to Christ. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted." If you feel a thorn in your foot, remember that it once pierced his head. If you have a trouble or a difficulty, you may see there the mark of his hands, for he has climbed that way before. The whole path of sorrow has his blood-bedabbled footsteps all along, for the Man of Sorrows has been there, and he can now have sympathy with you. "Yes," I hear one say, "but my sorrows are the result of sin." So were his; though not his own, yet the result of sin they were. "Yes," you say, "but I am slandered, and I cannot bear it." They called him a drunken man, and a wine-bibber. Why, when you once think of the sufferings of Christ, yours are not worth a thought. Like the small dust of a balance that may be blown away with the breath of an infant, such are our agonies and our trials when compared with his. Drink thy little cup; see what a cup he drained. The little vinegar and gall that fall to thy share thou mayest gladly recede, for these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared to the sufferings through which he passed.

Finally, upon this point; he thus became perfect *as our exemplar*. This, too, was necessary in bringing many sons unto glory, for we come to heaven by following the example of Christ, as well as by being washed in his blood. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" that holiness is best of all promoted by an investigation of Christ's character, and a studious imitation of all its points. Now had Christ not suffered he could not have been an example to us. We should have said, "Yes, yes, he may be an example to unsuffering angels, but not to men who have to tread the hot coals of the furnace." He could have afforded no example of patience if he had never suffered; he could never have taught us to forgive if he had never felt injuries; he could not have trained us to holy courage if he had never fought a battle; he could never have shown us the way to make tribulation work experience, and experience hope, if through tribulation he had not himself waded to his throne. We want not an example taken from princes to be applied to peasants. We need a poor man to be an example for the poor; we want a man who lives in private to teach us how to live in retirement; we want one who fears not the face of crowds to show us how to walk in our public ways. We want, if we would meet the case of fallen humanity, a man just like the Savior, who passed through all the various phases of life, was in all companies, was shot at from all quarters, was tempted in all points like as we are, and this could not have been if he had been led in quiet ways along a path of joy. He must do business on the tempestuous deeps; his ship must rock, his anchor drag, the thick darkness and the lightnings must gather round him; they did so, and thus the captain of our salvation

was made perfect *through suffering*, as an example for our imitation. I would that we might each of us know him in the efficacy of his blood, in the glory of his righteousness, in the sweetness of his sympathy, and in the perfection of his example, for then should we know him to the joy of our hearts for ever.

III. And now, lastly, our point—CHRIST'S HAVING BEEN MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING WILL ENNOBLE THE WHOLE WORK OF GRACE.

"It became him for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory"—that is the great work—"to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." The whole thing will work for his glory. Oh, my brethren, how this will glorify God at the last, that Christ, the man, should have been perfect through suffering! How this will glorify him in the eyes of *devils!* Looking upwards from their beds of fire where they bite their iron bands in vain, how will they see the wisdom and power of God as more than a match for the wisdom and might of their leader! It was in man that they defeated God; in man God destroys them. They trampled on man's heel; man has broken their head. They took away from man the transient crown of his Eden-glory; man wears the unfading crown of immortality. Man, even man, sits upon the throne of Godhead, and that man crowned with light and glory everlasting was a man who did encounter Satan; who met him, too, on fair grounds; not a man shielded from pain; not a man who had an immunity from internal or external distress; but a man full of weakness, full of infirmity, like other men, and yet, through God in alliance with his manhood, more than a conqueror, and now reigning for ever and ever. Milton, I think it is, supposes that this may have been the reason for Satan's first rebellion, because he could not bear that an inferior race should be lifted up to be set above himself on God's throne. Whether this be so or not, it must certainly be an aggravation to the misery of that proud arch-traitor, that now the man, the man, the man in whose image God was defeated, is heir of all things, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

How greatly will God be exalted that day *in the eyes of lost spirits*. Ah! ye that shall perish—God grant there may be none such here!—if you shall ever perish in hell, you will have to glorify God as you see Christ, who was made perfect through suffering, reigning there. You will not be able to say, "My damnation lies at God's door," for you will see in Christ a suitable Savior. You will have to look up and say, "Yes, he who was preached to me on Sabbath-days was God; he could save me. He whom I was bidden to trust in was man, and could sympathise with me, but I would not come unto him that I might have life." In letters of fire ye shall see it written, "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not;" and even your moans and groans as ye suffer shall be but an utterance of this awful truth—"Great God, thou art just, nay, thou art doubly just; just, first, in damning me for sin, just, next, in trampling me under foot, because I trampled under foot the blood of the Son of God and counted his covenant an unholy thing." Your weepings and wailings shall be but the deep bass of the awful praise which the whole universe, willingly or unwillingly, must give to him who has provided a perfect Savior, and made him perfect through suffering.

Oh, my brethren, what delight and transport will seize *the minds of those who are redeemed!* How will God be glorified then! Why, every wound of Christ will cause an everlasting song. As we shall circle his throne, rejoicing, will not this be the very summit of all our harmony—"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood." We must not say what God could do or could not do, but it does seem to me that by no process of creation could he have ever made such beings as we shall be when we are brought to heaven; for if he had made us perfect yet then we should have stood through our own holiness; or if he had forgiven us without an atonement then

we should never have seen his justice, nor his amazing love. But in heaven we shall be creatures who feel that we have everything but deserve nothing; creatures that have been the objects of the most wonderful love, and therefore so mightily attached to our Lord that it would be impossible for a thousand Satans ever to lead us astray. Again. We shall be such servants as even the angels cannot be, for we shall feel under deeper obligation to God than even they. They are but created happy; we shall be redeemed by the blood of God's dear Son, and I am sure, brethren, day without night we shall circle God's throne rejoicing, having more happiness than the angels, for they do not know what evil is, but we shall have known it to the full, and yet shall be perfectly free from it. They do not know what pain is, but we shall have known pain, and grief, and death, and yet shall be immortal. They do not know what it is to fall, but we shall look down to the depths of hell and remember that these were our portion. Oh! how we will sing, how we will chant his praise, and this, I say again, shall be the highest note, that we owe all to that bright one, that Lamb in the midst of the throne. We will tell it over, and over, and over again, and find it an inexhaustible theme for melodious joy and song that he became man, that he sweat great drops of blood, that he died, that he rose again. While the angels are singing "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" we will bid them stop the song a moment, while we say, "He whom ye thus adore was once covered with bloody sweat." As we cast our crowns at his feet, we will say, "And he was once despised and rejected of men." Lifting up our eyes and saluting him as God over all, blessed for ever, we will remember the reed, the sponge, the vinegar, and the nails; and as we come to him and have fellowship with him, and he shall lead us beside the living fountains of water, we will remember the black brook of Kedron of which he drank, and the awful depths of the grave into which he descended. Amid all the splendours of heaven, we shall never forget the agony, and misery, and dishonor of earth; and even when they sing the loudest sonnets of God's love, and power, and grace, we will sing this after all, and before all, and above all, that Jesus the Son of God died for us, and this shall be our everlasting song—"He loved us and gave himself for us, and we have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Christian Sympathy

A Sermon for the Lancashire Distress

(No. 479)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, November 9th, 1862, by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

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

IN ENDEAVORING TO JUSTIFY the ways of God, Job's three friends came to the harsh conclusion that he would not have been so severely afflicted if he had not been a very great sinner. Among other accusations against the afflicted patriarch, Eliphaz the Temanite had the cruelty to lay this at his door, "Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry." Such a slander we may describe as "speaking wickedly for God," for in his ignorance of the great laws of Providence towards the saints in this life, the Temanite had uttered falsehood in order to account for the divine procedure. God's own testimony of Job is that he was "a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil;" and certainly he could never have earned the character of "perfect" if he had been devoid of pity for the poor. Richly did the three miserable comforters deserve the burning rebuke of their slandered friend, "Ye are forgers of lies, ye are physicians of no value. O that ye would altogether hold your peace and it shall be your wisdom."

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

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

I. HUMAN SYMPATHY, ITS COMMENDATIONS.

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

2. Further, we may remark that *the absence of sympathy has always been esteemed, in all countries, and in all ayes, one of the most abominable of vices*. In old classic history who are the men held up to everlasting execration? Are they not those who had no mercy on the poor. Each land has its legend of the proud noble who hoarded up his corn in the day of famine, and bade the perishing multitudes curse and die; and down to this day the name of such a wretch is quoted as a word of infamy. A man without a heart would be a beast more worthy of being hunted down than

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. Here I must supplement that thought with another; *sympathy may often be the direct means of conversion.* How do the Romanists craftily avail themselves of this! The loaves and fishes have always been used at Rome as an attraction to the multitude. Still the Sister of Mercy, with her basket on her arm, goes to the poor, or devotes herself to the sick—and in this we praise them; were it the

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

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

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

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

Some say that there is very little Christian sympathy abroad. I do not believe them, except as regards themselves. I dare say they have measured other men's corn with their own bushels. When any say, "O, there is no love in the Church," I have always noticed that, without exception, they have no love themselves. On the other hand, we have heard others say, "What a blessed unity there is in the Church; when we come to the Tabernacle it does us good to get such hearty shakes of the hand, and to see such love in every brother's eye." When they speak thus, I know the reason is that they carry fire in their own hearts, and then they think the Church warm, while the others carry lumps of ice in their hearts, and then they imagine that everybody must be cold.

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

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

3. Much want of sympathy is produced by *our ignorance of one another*. We do not know the sufferings of our fellows. If I had brought the newspaper here to-day, and I had half a mind to do so, and had read you some extracts about the sufferings in Preston, and Wigan, and the various

towns in Lancashire, you would have known much more about the distress than you do now. Or if, which would do as well, you were to go next Monday with some City missionary to the least East end, or St. Giles's, or some poor district this side the water you would say, "Dear me, I did not know that people really did suffer at this rate; I had no idea of it or I would have given more to the poor." We want to be educated into the knowledge of our national poverty; we want to be taught and trained, to know more of what our fellow-men can and do suffer. Oh! if the Christian Church knew the immorality of London, she would cry aloud to God. If but for one night you could see the harlotry and infamy, if you could but once see the rascality of London gathered into one mass, your hearts would melt with woe and bitterness, and you would bow yourselves before God and cry unto him for this city as one that mourneth for his only son, even for his firstborn.

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

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

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

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

holy discipline and watchfulness be maintained over the entire Church, by the care and forethought of every one for his next friend. Thus can you practically allow your Christian sympathy.

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

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

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

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

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

whose cause I plead to-day. A bee that has lost its wings makes its appeal for a little honey to every childlike heart here today, and they who are true to God will not refuse it their aid.

2. Remember, too, *that the cause of this suffering is a national sin—the sin of slavery*. We have not yet passed the third generation, and upon a nation God visits sin to the third and fourth generation. We have rid ourselves, at last, of this accursed stain so far as our present Government is concerned, we are therefore delivered from any fear in future on that ground; but still, if slavery be now in America, we must remember that it would not have been there if it had not been carried there, and we are partners in guilt. Moreover, there has been too much winking at slavery amongst the merchants of Manchester and Liverpool. There has not been that abhorrence of the evil which should have been, and therefore it is just in the Providence of God that when America is cut with the sword we should be made to smart with the rod. If the Lord is pleased to smite our nation in one particular place, yet we must remember that it is meant for us all. Let us all bear the infliction as our tribulation, and let us cheerfully take up the burden, for it is but a little one compared with what our sins might have brought upon us. Better far for us to have famine than war. From all civil war and all the desperate wickedness which it involves, good Lord deliver us; and if thou smitest us as thou hast done, it is better to fall into the hand of God than into the hand of man.

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

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

5. Wherefore need I urge you, my hearers? I feel that you are ready now to assist these suffering ones. *Let your own gratitude to God move you*. Blessed be God that you have not this famine and straitness of bread. Thank the Master that though times may be hard, and some may now and then

complain, yet we have not to walk through our streets and see our factories shut up, and miss the smoke which marks the daily toil that brings food to hungry mouths. We have not to know every habitation is a Bochim because the strong man boweth down for lack of bread, and the faces of the children are wan, and the mothers weep, and even the breasts refuse the infant child its needed nourishment. Give as God has prospered you. He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and the Lord shall remember him in the time of trouble. He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life freely given him; let him, therefore, freely give, even as he hath Freely received.

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

A Message from God for Thee

A Sermon

(No. 480)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, November 16th, 1862, by

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins."—Lamentations 4:22.

EVERY SABBATH we are insisting upon it that both the Law and the Gospel have a voice to universal manhood: the Law in its condemnation of every subject under its sway, and the Gospel in its gracious invitation and command to every creature under heaven. Yet, at the same time, we must never forget that both the Law and the Gospel have a special voice to certain characters, that the law has ten-fold thunders for peculiar sinners, and, on the other hand, that the Gospel has a voice of unutterable sweetness to those favored persons who have by the Holy Spirit been prepared to hear its voice. While there are texts which are universal, and invitations whose range is as wide as fallen humanity, there are at the same time a still larger number of texts which are aimed like arrows at an appointed target. My text this morning can never be understood unless we clearly point out the characters to whom it is addressed. The blessing is not for the daughter of Edom, neither is the curse for the daughter of Zion. We must be very earnest with our own hearts this morning, to discover, if possible, whether we come under the number of those whose warfare is accomplished, and whose sin is pardoned; or whether, on the other hand, we abide with the multitude on whom resteth the curse of God, and whose sins shall be discovered and punished by the right-hand of the Most High. I have a double message from the Lord this morning. I say not alone, as did the blind prophet of old, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings;" but I have also to say, "Come in thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without." According to the persons I address, my message will be as pleasant as ever was brought by those whose feet were beautiful upon the mountains because they published good tidings of great joy, or as dreadful as that which Daniel bore to the trembling monarch in the day when his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

Our two messages we will *try to deliver in their order*; we shall then want your attention and patience for a minute while we answer the question—*Why the difference?* and then we will *press upon each character the force of the message*, that each may be led to believe what is addressed to him.

I. Our FIRST MESSAGE IS ONE OF COMFORT. "The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity."

1. We find, at the outset, *a joyous fact*. Read it with glistening eyes ye to whom it belongs—"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion." In the case of the kingdom of Judah, the people had suffered so much in their captivity that their God, who in his anger had put them from him, felt his repentings kindle together, and considered that they had suffered enough; "For she hath received at the Lord's hand," said the prophet, "double for all her sin." Brethren, in

our case we have not been punished at all, but yet the words may stand as they are, and be literally true, for the punishment of our iniquity is accomplished. Remember that Sin must be punished. Any theology which offers the pardon of sin without a punishment, ignores the major part of the character of God. God is love, but God is also just—as severely just as if he had no love, and yet as intensely loving as if he had no justice. To gain a just view of the character of God you must perceive all his attributes as infinitely developed; justice must have its infinity acknowledged as much as mercy. Sin *must* be punished. This is the voice which thunders from the midst of the smoke and the fire of Sinai—"The soul that sinneth it shall die;" "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." "Sin must be punished" is written on the base of the eternal throne in letters of fire; and, as the damned in hell behold it, their hopes are burned to ashes. Sin must be punished, or God must cease to be. The testimony of the Gospel is not that the punishment has been mitigated or foregone, or that justice has had a sop given it to close its mouth. The consolation is far more sure and effectual; say ye unto the daughter of Zion that "the punishment of her iniquity is *accomplished*." Christ hath for his people borne all the punishment which they deserved; and now every soul for whom Christ died may read with exultation—"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished." God is satisfied, and asks no more.

Sin deserved God's wrath; that wrath has spent itself on Christ. The black and gathering clouds had all been summoned to the tempest, and manhood stood beneath the dark canopy waiting till the clouds of vengeance should empty out their floods. "Stand thou aside!" said Jesus—"Stand thou aside, my spouse, my Church, and I will suffer in thy stead." Down dashed the drops of fire; the burning sleet swept terribly over his head, and beat upon his poor defenceless person, until the clouds had emptied out their awful burden, and not a drop was left. Beloved, it was not that the cloud swept by the wind into another region where it tarries until it be again called forth, but it was annihilated, it spent itself entirely upon Christ. There is no more punishment for the believer since Christ hath died for him. In his dying, our Lord has satisfied the divine vengeance even to the full. Then this, too, *must satisfy our conscience*. The enlightened conscience of a man is almost as inexorable as the justice of God, for an awakened conscience, if you give it a false hope, will not rest upon it, but crieth out for something more. Like the horse-leech it saith—"Give, give, give." Until you can offer to God a full satisfaction, you cannot give the conscience a quietus. But now, O daughter of Zion, let thy conscience be at rest. Justice is satisfied; the law is not despised: it is honored; it is established. God can now be just, severely so, and yet, seeing that thy punishment is accomplished, thou mayest come with boldness unto him, for no guilt doth lie on thee. Thou art accepted in the Beloved; thy guilt was laid on him of old, and thou art now safe."

In thy Surety thou art free,
 His dear hands were pierced for thee;
 With his spotless vesture on,
 Holy as the Holy One."
 Come thou boldly unto God, and rejoice thou in him.

Lest, however, while God is reconciled and conscience is quieted, our fears should even for an instant arise, let us repair to Gethsemane and Calvary, and see there this great sight, how the punishment of our iniquity is accomplished. There is the God of heaven and of earth wrapped in human form. In the midst of those olives yonder I see hmt in an agony of prayer. He sweats, not as one who labors for the bread of earth, but as one who toils for heaven. He sweats "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." It is not the sweat of his brow only, but "All his

head, his hair, his garments, bloody be." God is smiting him, and laying upon him the punishments of our iniquities. He rises, with his heart exceeding sorrowful even unto death. They hurry him to Pilate's judgment-seat. The God of heaven and earth stands in human form to be blasphemed, and falsely accused before the tribunal of his recreant creature. He is taken by the soldiery to Gabbatha, they strip, they scourge him; clots of gore are on the whip as it is lifted from his back. They buffet him, and bruise him with their blows; as if his robe of blood were not enough, they throw about his shoulders an old cloak, and make him a mimic king. Little knew they that he was the King of kings. He gives his back to the smilers, and his cheeks to them that pluck off the hair, he hides not his face from shame and spitting. Oh! what shall be said of thee, thou Son of man? In what words shall we describe thy grief? All ye that pass by behold and see if there was ever any sorrow like unto his sorrow that was done unto him! Oh God, thou hast broken him with a rod of iron; all thy waves and thy billows have gone over him. He looks, and there is none to help; he turns his eye around, and there is none to comfort him. But see, through the streets of Jerusalem he is hastened to his death; they nail him to the transverse wood; they dash it into the ground; they dislocate his bones; he is poured out like water; all his bones are out of joint; he is brought into the dust of death; agonies are piled on agonies; as in the classic fable the giants piled Ossa upon Pelion that they might reach the stars, so now that man may reach to heaven, misery is piled on misery, what if I say hell on hell! but Jesus bears the dreadful load. At last he reaches the climax of anguish, grief could go no higher. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" was the sum total of all human misery; the gathering up of all the wrath of God, and all the sorrow of man into one sentence. And thus he dies! Say ye unto the daughter of Zion that her punishment is accomplished. "It is finished!" Let the angels sing it; hymn it in the plains of glory, tell it here on earth, and once again say ye unto the daughter of Zion that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins! This, then, is the joyous note we have to sound this morning.

2. But—but—and here comes the solemn, soul-searching part of our discourse—Is the punishment of *mine* iniquity accomplished? *Let us see to whom this message is sent.* Will you open your Bibles at the book of Lamentations—it is but a slender volume—and follow me a moment with your eyes and with your hearts, for this promise is sent to a certain character, and I know there are some here who will read their own history therein.

In the first chapter and at the sixth verse you find it said of her—"From the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed." We should have thought that Christ would have died for those who had some form and comeliness, but no. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*." At the coming of the Holy Spirit into the soul, all self-righteousness melts away, our merit is dissolved like the rime of the morning frost before the heat of the rising sun. In the light of the Holy Spirit the darkness of the creature is removed, and the fancied goodness of fallen humanity dies like a dream. Now the man perceives himself to be utterly vile; that which once he esteemed as making him lovely in the sight of God has withered before his eyes, and all his glory is trailed in the mire. My hearer, has all thy self-righteousness been taken from thee? for rest assured thou art not this daughter of Zion unless thy beauty has all departed, and all thy boastful thoughts have been utterly slain.

Wonder of wonders! the eighth and ninth verses tell us "Jerusalem hath grievously sinned," and the ninth verse tells us yet more, that "*her filthiness is in her skirts*." Thus, those for whom Christ died are made to feel their sin. While their righteousness becomes as filthy rags, their

unrighteousness becomes loathsome and detestable in their sight. Holy Scripture rakes up the most terrible figures to set forth the abominable character of sin, some, even, which we would hardly dare to quote to meet the public ear, but which the renewed heart feels to be perfectly true. The heart discovereth itself to be all wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores, till it abhorreth itself before God. "O Lord, I am vile." "We are all together as an unclean thing." "We are laden with iniquity." Such are the cries of awakened souls, and it is to such as these that the gracious message is directed.

Look on, again, to the seventeenth verse, and there you find that this filthiness has brought her into utter distress—"Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and *there is none to comfort her.*" So those to whom this message is sent are brought, through a sense of sin, into a comfortless state. Ceremonies, Baptism, the Lord's Supper—all these yield them no peace. They can no longer rest in their Church-goings and Chapel-goings. A formal, notional religion would once satisfy them, but they find no rest for the sole of their foot in such a presence now. Time was when if they went through a prayer at night and morning, and read a verse or two of the Bible, they thought all would be well; but now there is none to comfort them. These refuges of lies are all swept away, for the furious hail of conviction has laid them level with the ground. Let us be certain of this, that there is no word of peace or comfort for us in our text until the beauty in which we once boasted has all been withered before the wintry blasts of the law; till our filthiness has been discovered before our sight, and we have been led to an experimental acquaintance with our ruined and comfortless condition on account of our iniquities.

To make the case worse, this poor daughter of Zion is obliged to confess that she deserved all her sufferings. In the eighteenth verse she says—"The Lord is righteous: for I have rebelled against his commandments." The soul feels now that God is just. Unrenewed persons find fault with God's justice. Eternal punishment they cavil at; hell is such a bugbear to them, that, just as every culprit will, of course, find fault with the prison and the gallows, so they rail at the wrath to come, though that wrath is just as sure, notwithstanding all their objections to it. But when the heart is really touched by divine grace, then it has no more to say for itself, but pleads guilty at the bar of God's great assize; and if the Judge should put on the black cap, and condemn it to be taken instantly to the place of execution, that soul could only say, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, for I have sinned." I despair of ever finding a word of comfort for any man or woman among you, if you have not been brought to feel that you deserve the wrath of God. Come with the ropes about your necks, ready for execution, and you will find a God ready to forgive.

Further still: in the first verse of the second chapter you find that *her prayer was not yet heard*—"How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!" Well do I remember the time in my own experience when I prayed in vain; when I bowed my knees and the heavens were as brass, and not a word or answer of comfort was given to my languishing spirit! All who are converted do not pass through this, for no one experience is a standard for all, but remember I am seeking out a certain class this morning, for my text is addressed to a special character. If thou hast been for months, ay, even for years, crying for mercy, and still hast not found it, let not this cast thee down, for to thee is this message sent this morning. Thou art this daughter of Zion covered with a cloud, and I have to say unto thee that "the punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished." Thy prayer has come up with acceptance, for the Spirit inspired it and Jesus offered it. God absolves thee, from heaven thy forgiveness comes. Oh, believe the word

of the Lord, and rejoice therein. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Further: as her prayer was not heard, so *every place of refuge was broken down*. In the eighth verse of the second chapter you find—"The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying, therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament: they languished together." Even what few stones of the ruined wall remained as an heap behind which the Israelitish warriors might defend themselves were to be broken down. So God goes on overturning, overturning, overturning in the sinner's heart till Christ comes in. After every hope has been broken down we are apt to build up another. "Peace, peace, where there is no peace," is the sinner's constant cry. Our Lord, who is determined to bring us to the obedience of faith, continually beats down the sinner's confidences, till at last there is not one stone left upon another that is not thrown down; then the sinner yields himself a captive, and free grace leads him in triumph to the cross. Is this your case this morning, my dear hearer? If it be then, my sweet message is for you. "Go in peace, they sins which are many are all forgiven thee!"

Further still: this daughter of Jerusalem was now brought into a state of *deep humiliation*. Look at the tenth verse of the second chapter: "The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground and keep silence; they have cast up dust upon their heads: they have girded themselves in sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground." Here is a state of deep prostration of spirit! I do not want to enlarge on these points, because we have not time; and, what is more, there is no necessity for doing so, for you that have been brought through them understand them; and some of you who are in this state now will say, as I read the verses, "There is my picture; as face answereth to face in a glass so does the description of Jeremiah exactly answer to my condition." Well then, to you who lie in deep soul prostration, conscious that the lowest position is not too low for you, to you is this gracious message sent—"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished."

Furthermore: it seems from the thirteenth verse that all her foes here let loose against her, and her *grief exceeded all bounds* and prevented all comparison:—"What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?" So the sinner feels as if he stood all alone. That sorrowing young woman over yonder thinks that no one has ever suffered what she is now enduring. That trembling conscience there is writing this bitter thing against itself—"There was never such a sinner as I am, never one who had so hard a heart, and was so terribly broken on account of it!" Ye give a full vent to your sorrows, till your distress rolls like a torrent deep and wide. Yet it is not true that you are thus the only wayfarer in the path of repentance. Oh, but remember, that even though this were true, though all thine enemies, thine own heart, and all the devils in hell should conspire against thee, yet to thee, even to thee, thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people; speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem, and say unto her that her warfare is accomplished."

Not to keep you longer on this point let me take you on to another. In the eighteenth and nineteenth verses of the same chapter you will see that at last this afflicted daughter of Zion was brought to *constant prayer*:—"Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches, pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward him," and so on. Thus the soul is brought to abide

fast by the mercy-seat, and clings to the horns of the altar. At last the awakened spirit enters into a constant state of prayer, and its prayer is not so much an act as a condition. You know that hymn—that litany I was about to call it—

"Wealth and honor I disclaim,
 Earthly comfortd, Lord, are vain,
 These can never satisfy,
 Give me Christ, or else I die."

Every verse ends with that intense desire—"Give me Christ or else I die." This comes to be the state of a soul which God intends to bless; it falls into such a condition that it must have the blessing—"Give me Christ or else *I die*." "I can no denial take." Again, and again, and again, the sound of its moaning goeth up before the Lord God of Sabbaoth; its knocks at the gate of mercy are as frequent as the moments of the hour. Now, to you who are thus brought to pray because you cannot help it, who do not pray at set times merely, but whose very life has become one perpetual prayer for mercy—to you the Master speaks to-day. (Lord! open the ear that it may hear!) "The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished."

I have no time to go further into this case of the daughter of Zion. If you read the whole book of Lamentations through, it will well repay you. If you have ever passed through a state of conviction, if the law has ever had its perfect work in you, you will find that the Lamentations of Jeremiah will suit you, and when you get to the verse with which we commenced our reading this morning, you will read it with a holy unction resting on it—"It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not." Now if you thus can read it, then remember there is no doubt at all about the fact that the precious word of this morning is for you; lay hold on it by faith; feed on it, live on it, and rejoice.

3. I have not yet, however, told this message perfectly, for we must not overlook a third point. We have had a joyous fact, then a chosen person, and now there is *a precious promise*. "I will no more carry thee away into captivity." Thou art in captivity now, but it is the last thou shalt ever have. Thou art sorrowing on account of sin, and troubled even to despair; but thou *art* now forgiven—not thou *shalt* be, but thou *art*; all the wrath was laid on Christ; there is none remaining upon thee; thou art forgiven, and thy captivity is turned as the streams in the south. Let thy mouth be filled with laughter, and thy tongue with singing, for the Lord hath done great things for thee. These convictions of thine shall never return again in their present terror; only do thou cling to the Rock of Ages, and no wave shall bear thee back into the deeps. Thou shalt go through the wilderness but once; thou shalt pass through the Jordan of a Savior's blood, and then thou shalt enter into Canaan and rest, for "we that have believed do enter into rest." And as to the future, in the world to come there is no captivity for thee. All thy hell is past; Tophet burns not for thee, neither can the pit shut its mouth upon thee. All that thou deservest of the wrath of God, Christ hath endured, and there is not a drop remaining for thee. Come thou to the golden chalice into which God drained his wrath, and look at the sparkling wine of love which filleth it. Ah, how changed from what it once was. 'Twas full, and foul, and black; each drop was Tophet, and the whole of it eternal misery. Christ drained it; to the very dregs he drained it; turning it upside down, he said, "It is finished!" and not a drop was left. Come thou, I say, to it, for it is not empty now; it is full again, but with what is it filled withal? 'Tis full to the brim and overflowing with love unsearchable, eternal, divine. Come thou and drink.

"Calvary's summit let us trace,

View the heights and depths of grace;
 Count the purple drops, and say,
 Thus my sins were borne away.
 Now no more his wrath we dread,
 Vengeance smote our Surety's head;
 Justice now demands no more,
 He hath paid the dreadful score.
 Sunk, as in a shoreless flood,
 Lost, as in the Saviours blood,
 Zion O! how bless'd art thou,
 Justified from all things now.

"I will take the cup of salvation, and will call on the name of the Lord." You may have troubles, but you will never have punishment; you may know affliction, but you shall never know wrath; you may go to the grave, but you shall never go to hell; you shall descend into the regions of the dead, but never into the regions of the damned; the Evil One may bruise your heel, but he shall never break your head; you may be in prison under doubts, but you shall never be in prison under condemnation. "He will no more carry thee away into captivity." Thy punishment is all accomplished on another. Thou art free to-day; come thou forth out from the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. Sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously, and brought out his people, and delivered them with his own right hand!

Thus have I sought, as best I could, to deliver my first message; I hope many will be comforted thereby.

II. We shall now turn to our second, which is, BURDEN OF WOE. Daughter of Edom! Thus saith the Lord unto thee—"I will visit thine iniquity." Unbeliever, thou who hast never felt thy need of Christ, and never fled to him, to thee he says, "I will visit thine iniquity." His justice tarries, but it is sure; his axe seems rusty, but it is sharp. The sins of the past are not buried; or if they be, they shall have a resurrection. Thy thoughts, thy words, thy deeds, shall all return in terror on thy head. Thou shalt begin, even in this life, to feel some of this punishment. On thy dying bed thy frail tenement shall creak, and thou shalt see the blazings of the furnace of fire through the rifts of thy crumbling cottage. When thou shalt lie a-dying, then shall the messengers of the Emperor of heaven stand about thy bed and summon thee to judgment. Thy cheek shall blanch, however brazen may now be thy brow. Then, strong man, thou shalt be bowed down, and thy loins shall be loosened, for when God dealeth with thee thou shalt feel his hand, even though thou wert girt about with bars of brass or triple steel. And then thou diest; thy death shall be the foretaste of the second death. Thy soul descends into the pit amongst thy kindred, and thou beginnest to feel what God can do against the men who laughed, despised, and defied him. Then shall thine oaths be all fulfilled then shall thy lustings and thy revellings come to thee in their true light. Then shalt thou hear ringing in thy conscience the echo of the divine sentence, "Thou deserves" all this, for God gave thee warning when he said "I will surely visit thee for thine iniquity." Then shall the trumpet ring—"Awake! Awake! ye dead and come to judgment!" From sea and land they start to live again. Thy soul comes back to its body which was its partner in guilt. I see you, and the multitudes like you, standing there while the great white throne is lifted up on high; the righteous have been gathered out from among the crowd and you remain; and, now, hark ye! hark ye! to a voice more dread than thunder—"Bind them up in bundles to burn them!—the drunkard with the drunkard; the swearer

with the swearer: the careless, the proud, the self-righteous, each with each, and cast them into the furnace of fire." It is done, and where art thou now, sinner? Dost thou say of me this morning—"I knew that thou would speak not good but evil unto me?" Another day thou shalt bless thy stern reprover! Call me not thine enemy; it is thy sin that is thine enemy. I make not hell. I do but warn thee of it with a brother's love. Thou diggest hell thyself; thou thyself fillest it, and the breath of thy sins shall fan the fire. "The Lord of Hosts *will* visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom." Hear it; hearken thou to it, for it is the voice of God which now forewarns thee. Beware, O careless soul, beware of forgetting God, lest he tear thee in pieces, and there be none to deliver thee. I have heavy tidings indeed from the Lord to thee.

But who is this daughter of Edom? As we searched for the daughter of Zion just now, so we must also search for the daughter of Edom. The verse preceding our text seems to give us some inkling of who she is. Of course it refers to the race of Esau, who inhabited such cities as Bozrah and Petra, which are now become a desolate wilderness. It seems, then, according to the twenty-first verse, that the daughter of Edom was *a mirthful one*. In irony and sarcasm the prophet says—"Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz; the cup shall pass through unto thee: thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked." There is a holy joy which belongs unto the people of God; there is an unholy mirth which is a sure sign of a graceless state. You say from day to day, "How shall we amuse ourselves? What next gaiety; and what new levity? With what new liquor shall we fill the bowl of merriment? What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Pleasure is your life, your only thought. Ah! daughter of Edom, there is sackcloth for thy fine linen; there are ashes for all thine ornaments; thine earrings shall give place to everlasting tears-drops, and all thy beauty shall turn to rottenness and decay! Weep, all ye that thus make mirth in the presence of the avenging Judge, for the day cometh when he shall turn your laughter into mourning, and all your joys shall be ended! "Thus saith the Lord: say, a sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should he then make mirth?"

Edom, moreover dwelt *very carelessly*, she dwelt in the land of Uz, far from danger. Her dwelling was among the rocks. Petra, the stony city, was cut out of the live rock. The daughter of Edom said in her heart, "Who shall come hither to disturb the eagle's nest? The son of Esau dwelleth like an eagle in his eyrie, and he pounceth down upon his prey or ever his victim is aware? Who shall go up and bind the strong eagle, or pull forth his feathers from his mighty wings? Lo! he dareth to look in the face of the sun, and he laugheth at the spear of the hunter; who shall bring him down?" Thus saith the lord, "O daughter of Edom, I will visit thine iniquity." "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." Ye proud men and women, ye say, "Will God deal with us? Will he treat us as common sinners? Even if he should, we will not care; fill high the bowl and let us drink, even though it be at Belshazzar's feast; we will drink, though there be damnation in the cup!" Thus speak ye, but thus saith the Lord, even as he said unto Moab—"I will bring down thy high looks. I will trample thee like straw is trodden for the dunghill, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord."

More than this; it appears that this daughter of Edom rejoiced because of the sorrow of Zion, and made mirth and *merriment over the sorrows of others*. Do you not hear even the wise men say—"Ah! These drivelling hypocrites, whining about sin! Why, it is only a peccadillo, a mere trifle!" "Look," says one—"I am a man of the world. I know nothing of these women's fears and child-like tremblings: why do you sit and hear a man talk to you like this, and tell you of hell and

of judgment—do you believe it? "No," says this man "I know nothing of your care; I despise the narrow spirits that believe in justice and in wrath to come!" O haughty boaster, as the Lord my God liveth, the day shall come when thou shalt be trodden as ashes under the soles of our feet. Beware ye, for when the Avenger cometh forth a great ransom shall not deliver you! I see the floods bursting forth on the earth. Noah, the preacher of righteousness, has been laughed at, and called an old hypocrite for talking of God's destroying nations. He is shut in yonder ark, and what think ye now of the prophet, what think ye now of the preacher of righteousness? Ye are swept away; the waves have covered you; a few of your strong ones climb to the tops of the hills, but the all-devouring waters reach you there. I hear your last shriek of awful anguish; there is not a single note of unbelief in it now; as you go down and the gurgling waters cover you, your last verdict is that the prophet was right and you were fools. To your death-beds I make my appeal. I appeal from your drunken lives to the sad sobriety of death. From all your gaiety, and carelessness, and contempt to day; I appeal to your last hours, and to your resurrection terrors! God help thee! God help thee to repent! but heavy, O daughter of Edom, heavy is thy curse; God will visit thine iniquity upon thee!

It seems, too, from a passage in Malachi, first chapter and fourth verse, that Edom always retained a hope, a vain, a self-sufficient confidence. "Whereas Edom saith, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, they shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, the border of wickedness, and, the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever." So there are some of you who say, "I dread not a loss of hope! Why, I have fifty refuges; I trust in this, and that, and the other, and when I do despair a moment yet I pluck up heart again." Ah! daughter of Edom, God will visit thee for thine iniquity, and thy vain confidences shall be as stubble to the flame.

Besides, it seems that this daughter of Edom was very proud. Jeremiah describes her in the forty-ninth chapter and the sixteenth verse, in much the same language as Obadiah. But this tremendous pride was brought low at the last; and so also all those who think themselves righteous shall find themselves low at last. They rest and trust in the rotten and broken reed of their own doings, and woe shall be unto them, for God will visit them for their sins.

I shall not enlarge further, except on that special word of warning with which the verse ends, "*I will discover thy sins.*" Let every sinner here be afraid because of this! You have hidden your sin; He will discover it. It may be it was last night; 'twas in a very secret place, and you contrived so that none might track you; but the All-seeing One will discover your sin. "How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!" I may address some here who wear a very excellent moral character in the eyes of their neighbors, but if those neighbors did but know all, they would loathe them utterly. Your disguises are rent, your masks are plucked away; the Revealer of Secrets cometh forth. Dreadful shall be the day when, with sound of trumpet, every secret iniquity shall be published in the house-tops. The day cometh when, as Achan stood guilty before Joshua, so shall every man hear it said, "Be sure your sin will find you out." This is thy portion, daughter of Edom! Thy secret sins shall all be published in the light of the sun, for God will surely visit thee!

III. The time expires, but I must just notice the next point—WHAT IS THE REASON WHY THERE ARE THESE DIFFERENT MESSAGES?

The reason why I had to publish a message of mercy to the daughter of Zion just now was *sovereign grace*. The daughter of Zion had no right to pardon; she had done nothing to deserve it, but God had chosen her, and had entered into covenant with Abraham concerning her, that he would

not leave nor forsake her. Everlasting love preserved deliverance for the beloved city. Our God had kindled in her heart thoughts of repentance, and in his sovereignty, because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, he sent her the gracious message of full remission by an accomplished punishment.

But why was the second message sent to the daughter of Edom? Here it is not the line of sovereignty, but the line of justice; he sent it *because the daughter of Edom deserved it*. Sinner, when God says he will punish sin, thou mayest kick against it if thou wilt, but thy conscience tells thee thou deservest to be punished. God will not smite thee more than thou deservest, but let him only give thee as much, and wrath will come upon thee to the uttermost. Edom hath waxed proud; she hath been careless; she hath despised God; she is unbelieving; she repenteth not; therefore shall her iniquity be published, and God shall visit it upon her head.

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT CLAIMS HAVE THESE MESSAGES TO OUR FAITH? Well, we believe this Bible to be the Word of God. I know we live in a day when even a bishop has ventured to impugn plenary inspiration. Do not attach too much importance to this new attack. It has no novelty in it; it is an old enemy, long since wounded to the heart, which now attempts a revival of its force. We have been alarmed at a man of straw, and a deal of noise has been made about nothing. The scullions of Zion's household are more glorious than this new hero of error, and are more than a match for him. We did think at first that there might be some force in his objections, but now we laugh them to scorn; ridicule is the only answer they deserve; let even the young children and the old women in the streets of Zion laugh at the new adversary! We believe still, and I hope that ever in this Christian land, and from this pulpit, I may always say that we believe this Book to be the Word of God. Well then, you to whom the first message is sent, believe it. You said, as I read the description just now, "That is my case." Very well, then, the punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished. Do not say, "I will try and believe it," but believe it. Do not say, "I hope it is true;" *it is true*; believe it, and walk out of this house full of joy, saying in thy spirit, "My punishment was borne by Christ; I shall never be carried into captivity any more; being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ my Lord; I am accepted, I am forgiven." Praise him every day now that his anger has passed away for ever, and let the men of the world see how happy a Christian can be. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment." Does anybody object to that quotation? Object to Solomon and not to me; I intend, God helping me, to rejoice and be glad all my days.

As for the second message, again I say this Book is God's Word, and it is true. Believe it. "Oh," says one, "but if I believed it, I should be full of awful anguish." Would to God you were; for do you not see that then you would come under the description of the daughter of Zion, and then the promise would be yours, for what is the law sent for? To dog men to hell? No, but to be our pedagogue to bring us to Christ. The schoolmasters in the old Greek times were such cruel fellows, that no boys would go to school voluntarily, so they had a pedagogue who with a stick, went round to the parents' houses and whipped the boys to school. Now we are so afraid to come to Christ, though he is a good and tender Master, that he employs the law to go round to our houses to whip us to himself, his peace, his great salvation. Ah! I would I could drive you to the Savior, for these thunders of to-day are meant to bring you from under the law that you may put your trust in Jesus Christ alone. Oh, daughter of Edom, careless and proud, thy doom is certain! The wrath of God is sure. Oh that thou wouldst but believe this, and that thy heart were broken, for then we might

come to thee again, and say, "Thus saith the Lord, I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins."

May God bless the words of this morning, and unto his name be the glory for ever and ever.
Amen.

A Drama in Five Acts

A Sermon

(No. 481)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, November 23rd, 1862, by

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."—1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

HOLY SCRIPTURE SELDOM gives a special rule for each particular case, but it rather instructeth us by general principles applicable to all cases. To meet every distinct moral emergency which could possibly arise, and solve every separate problem of action, would require rather a library than a volume. To men who are taught of the Spirit of God, general principles are far more valuable than special precepts, and I am half persuaded that it is so with all persons; for it is less difficult to apply a general principle to a peculiar case than it is to find out exactly what the particular case may be, and what the special rule applicable to it. In writing to the Church at Corinth the apostle had to answer several questions with regard to marriage; whether, for instance, it was not better in those persecuting times, when men often had to flee suddenly from their houses, that they should remain unmarried; whether, again, supposing a person became a Christian after marriage, it was lawful for him to separate from the person with whom he was unequally yoked; and several other questions as to fitting action in certain extraordinary positions. To these the apostle answers with an "I suppose," or again, "Howbeit, for this speak I, not the Lord;" as if he felt himself quite out of his element in attempting to meet every case; but soon he lands on sure ground in the verses before us, and seems to say, "Whatever may be the answers which I ought to give to these special questions, of this one thing I am quite sure; I say positively and without any doubt that the time is short, and therefore it remaineth, whether ye are married or not, whether ye weep or whether ye rejoice, whether ye buy or whether ye sell, that ye should act in all these things as knowing, their temporary and unsubstantial character."

Dear brethren, the important lesson which we endeavor to teach this morning is just this—that because time is so short, and the things of this world so frail and fleeting, it becomes us always to look at the things which are seen in their true character, and never to build substantial hopes on unsubstantial comforts, nor seek for solid joy from unreal things.

In order that I may make this matter very plain, and may be the more likely to enlist your attention, and to secure the friendship of your memories in future years, I intend this morning to *take you to a play*. Strange thing for me to do, who have never crossed the threshold of a theater on any occasion, good or bad! Yet this morning I shall seat you in front of the stage, and I shall *put the worldling side by side with you while the five acts are performed*. I shall next invite you to attend *in the character of a Christian, to look through the whole and discern its emptiness*; then, in the third place, I shall *point you to the curtain which is quite sure to drop upon the scene*; and

then we will walk out of this theater of unreal show, this fashion of this world which passeth away, and *see what there is to do in this world which is real, practical, and lasting.*

Do not suppose that the idea of taking you to a theater this morning is original on my part; it is in my text. "The fashion of this world passeth away,"—the word translated "fashion" is borrowed from the changing scenes of the drama; where the splendid pageantry vanishes as the scene changes. Nor will you think Holy Scripture too severe in its comparison, when I remind you that one of the world's own poets has said

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players."

Nor will the most precise among you complain of the levity of a metaphor which is sanctioned by Apostolic use; but I trust you will all cheerfully listen, while in simple words I tell the story which the bard of the sanctuary has sung in flowing verse.

"This life's a dream, *an empty show*;
But the bright world to which I go,
Hath joys substantial and sincere:
When shall I wake and find me there?"

I. WE WILL WITNESS "THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD" AS IT PASSES BEFORE US, LISTENING TO THE WORLDLING'S COMMENT.

The *first act* introduces *those that have wives*. It opens with *a wedding*. The bride and bridegroom advance to the altar in bridal attire. The bells are ringing; crowds are cheering at the door, while overflowing mirth is supreme within. In another scene we observe domestic happiness and prosperity, a loving husband and a happy wife. Yet, further on in the performance, rosy children are climbing the father's knee; the little prattlers are lisping their mother's name. "Now," says our companion as he gazes with rapture, "This is real and enduring, I know it is; this will satisfy me; I crave for nothing more than this. *Home* is a word as sweet as heaven, and a healthy happy race of children is as fine a possession as even angels can desire. On this rock will I build all my hope; secure me this portion, and I cheerfully renounce the dreamy joys of religion." We whisper in his ear that all this is but a changing scene, and will by-and-bye pass away, for time is short, and wife and children are dying creatures. The man laughs at us, and says, "Fanatics and enthusiasts may seek eternal joys, but these are enough me." He believes that if there be anything permanent in the universe it is marrying and being given in marriage, educating and bringing up a family, and seeing them all comfortably settled. He is right in valuing the blessing, but wrong in making it his *all*. Will he see his error before the curtain falls? Or will he continue to found the hopes of an immortal spirit upon dying joys? See the green mounds in the cemetery, and the headstone, with "Here he lies." Alas for thee, poor deluded worldling, where is thy soul now? Doth it console thee that the dust of thine offspring shall mingle with thine ashes? Where hast thou now a home? What family hast thou now to care for? The first act is over; take breath and say, "This also is vanity."

The tenour of the drama changes, alas, how soon! Household joys are linked with household sorrows. *They that weep* are now before us in the *second act*. The cloudy and dark days have come. There are parents wringing their hands; a beloved child has died, and they are following its corpse to the tomb. Anon, the merchant has suffered a tremendous loss; he puts his hand to his aching head and mourns, for he knows not what will be the end of his troubles. The wife is smitten by the hand of death; she lies on her bed, blanched with sickness and wan with pain; there is a weeping husband at her side, and then there is another funeral, and in the dim distance I see the black horses

again and again. The woes of men are frequent, and sorrow's visits are not, like those of angels, few and far between. Our man of the world, who is much moved at this second act, foreseeing his own sorrows therein, weeps, until he fairly sobs out his feelings, clutches us with earnestness, and cries, "Surely this is awfully real; you cannot call this a fleeting sorrow or a light affliction. I will wring my hands for ever; the delight of my eyes has been taken from me; I have lost all my joys now; my beloved in whom I trusted has withered like a leaf in autumn before my face; now shall I despair; I shall never look up again!" "I have lost my fortune," says the afflicted merchant, "and distress overwhelms me; this world is indeed a wilderness to me; all its flowers are withered. I would not give a snap of my finger to live now, for everything worth living for is gone!" Sympathising deeply with our friend, we nevertheless venture to tell him that these trials to the Christian, because they are so short and produce such lasting good, are not killing sorrows. "Ah," says he, "you men of faith may talk in that way, but I cannot; I tell you these are real things." Like an English sailor, who, seeing a play, sprung upon the stage to help a lady in distress, believing that the whole was real, so do such men weep and sigh, as if they were to mourn for ever, because some earthly good has been removed. Oh that they knew that the depths of sorrow were never yet explored by a mortal mourner! Oh that they would escape from those lower deeps where immortal spirits weep and wail amidst an emphasis of misery! The sorrows of time are trifles indeed when compared with the pains of everlasting punishment; and on the other hand *we* reckon that they are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. They are but light afflictions, which are but for a moment, a mere pin's prick to the man of faith. Happy is the man whose eyes are opened to see that heirs of heaven sorrow not as those who are without hope. A real joy of heavenly origin is ever with believers, and it is but the shadow of sorrow which falls upon them. There let the curtain drop—let us enter into an eternal state, and what and where are these temporary griefs?

But the *third act* comes on, and presents us with a view of *those who rejoice*. It may be that the first-born son has come of age, and there are great festivities. They are eating and drinking in the servants' hall, and in the master's banquet chamber; there are high notes of joy, and many compliments, and the smiling sire is as glad as man can be. Or it is the daughter's wedding, and kind friends implore a thousand blessings on her head, and the father smiles and shares the joy. Or it is a gain in business, a fortunate speculation; or the profits of industry have come flowing in, slowly perhaps, but still surely, and the man is full of rejoicing; he has a house, and home, and friends, and reputation, and honor, and he is, in the eyes of all who know him, happy; those who do not know him, think he has no cares, that he can have no sorrows, that his life must be one perpetual feast, and that, surely there can be no spot in his sun, no winter in his year, no ebb to follow his floods. Our friend by our side is smiling at this sunny picture. "There," says he, "is not that real? Why, there must be something in that! What more do you want? Only let me get the same, and I will leave you the joys of faith, and heaven, and immortality, to yourselves; these are the things for me; only let me laugh and make merry, and you may pray as you will. Fill high the bowl for me; put the roast and the viands on the table, and let me eat and drink, for to-morrow I die." If we gently hint to our friend that all this passes away like a vision of the night, and that we have learned to look on it as though it were not, he laughs us to scorn, and accounts us mad when he is most mad himself. As for ourselves, so far from resting upon the softest couch that earth can give us, we spurn its vain delights.

"There's nothing round this spacious earth

That suits my large desire;
 To boundless joy and solid mirth
 My nobler thoughts aspire.
 Where pleasure rolls its living flood,
 From sin and dross refined,
 Still springing from the throne of God,
 And fit to cheer the mind."

But the *fourth act* of the drama is before us, and *they that buy* demand our attention. The merchant is neither a mourner nor a man of mirth; in the eyes of certain Mammonites he is attending to the one thing needful, the most substantial of all concerns. Here feast your eyes, ye hard, practical, earth-scrappers. There are his money-bags; hear how they thump on the table! There are the rolls of bonds, the banker's books, the title-deeds of estates, mortgages and securities, and the solid investment in his country's own console. He has made a good thing of life, and still he adheres business, as he should do; and, like a painstaking man, he is accumulating still and piling up his heap, meanwhile adding field to field and estate to estate, till soon he will possess a whole county. He has just now been buying a large and very fine house, where he intends to spend the remainder of his days, for he is about to retire from business; the layover is busy making out the transfer; the sum of money is waiting to be paid, and the whole thing is as good as settled. "Ah! now," says our friend, who is looking on at the play, "you are not going to tell me that this is all a shadow? It is not; there is something very solid and real here, at least, something that will perfectly satisfy me." We tell him we dare say there is something that will satisfy *him*, but *our* desires are of a larger span, and nothing but the infinite can fill them. Alas for the man who can find satisfaction in earthly things! It will be only for a time; for when he comes to lie upon his dying-bed, he will find his buyings and his sellings poor things wherewithal to stuff a dying pillow; he will find that his gainings and his acquisitions bring but little comfort to an aching heart, and no peace to a conscience exercised with the fear of the wrath to come. "Ah, ah!" he cries, and sneers sarcastically, putting us aside as only fit for Bedlam, "Let me trade and make a fortune, and that is enough for me; with that I shall be well content!" Alas, poor fool, the snow melts not sooner than the joy of wealth, and the smoke of the chimney is as solid as the comfort of riches.

But we must not miss the *fifth act*. See the rich man, our friend whom lately we saw married, whom we then saw in trouble, afterwards rejoicing and then prospering in business, has entered upon a green old age; he has retired, and *has now come to use the world*. You will notice that in my text this is the last act of the drama. The world says he has been a wise man and has done well, for all men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself. Now he keeps a liberal table, a fine garden, excellent horses, and many servants, he has all the comforts in fact that wealth can command, and as you look around his noble park, as you gaze at his avenue of fine old trees, or stay a day or two at the family mansion and notice all its luxuries, you hear your friend saying, "Ay, there is something very real here; what do you think of this?" When we hint that the gray hairs of the owner of all these riches betoken that his time is short, and that if this be all he has he is a very poor man, for he will soon have to leave it, and that his regrets in leaving will make his death more pitiable than that of a pauper, our friend replies, "Ah! ah! you are always talking in this way. I tell you this is not a play. I believe it is all real and substantial, and I am not, by any talking of yours, to be made to think that it is unsubstantial and will soon be gone." O world, thou hast fine actors, to cheat men so well, or else mortal man is an easy fool, taken in thy net like the fishes of the sea. The whole

matter is most palpably a mere show, but yet men give their souls to win it. Wherefore, O sons of men, are ye thus beside yourselves? "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?"

Dear friends, I have put before your mind's eye a fair picture of that which men who live by sight and not by faith regard as being the chief end of man, and the real object of his being. It is to be married; to pass through the trials and joys of life with decency, to trade and grow rich, and at last to use the comforts of this world without abuse: a very comfortable and quiet picture, by no means the representation we should have to present before you of the profligate, He profane, the dissolute, or the debauched. There is nothing here but what is proper and right, and yet everything is improper and everything becomes wrong at once if these be thought to be the substantial things for which an immortal spirit is to spend its fires, and for which an undying soul is to exhaust its powers.

II. Let us now take the CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THIS DRAMA.

"Life *is* real; life is earnest:" it is real thus far to the Christian, it is real for work and activity for God; it is real in the solemn responsibility which it brings; it is real in the gratitude which we owe to God for the comforts which he is pleased to bestow; it is real to us so far as we can see God therein, and can turn everything to God's glory. The unreality of this world to a Christian, is found in the fact that *time is short*. This is the wand which torches the substance and makes it, before the eye of wisdom, dissolve into a shade. Time is short!

When the apostle declares that *they that have wives*, should be as though they had none, he does not teach us to despise the marriage state, but not to seek our heaven in it, nor let it hinder our serving the Lord. It is supposed that there are some things which a man without a wife and family can do—those things the man with a wife and family should do. It is supposed that a man without a wife can give his time to the cause of God: the man with a wife should do the same, and he will not find it difficult to do so if God hath blessed him with one who will second all his holy endeavors. It is supposed that a man without a wife has no care: a man with a wife should have none, for he should cast all his cares on God who careth for him. "He that careth not for his own house is worse than a heathen man and a publican;" and yet the apostle says, in the verse following my text, "But I would have you without carefulness;" for we should learn to live by faith. The man who has a large family, and many things to exercise his mind, should yet, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, lye as quietly and comfortably as though he had none, depending and resting by simple faith upon the providence and goodness of God. Then, again, it is supposed that an unmarried man will find it easier to die, for there will be none of that sorrow at leaving his beloved family: the man with a wife and family *should*, by faith, find it just as easy since the promise runs, "Leave thy fatherless children, and let thy widows trust in me." Full of the same faithful tenderness and affection which another husband would exhibit, and even excelling in love and kindness, yet the Christian should look up to the divine Lord who is the husband of the widow, and with confidence leave his offspring, and bid them trust in his God. May God the Holy Ghost teach us how to walk in our households, loving ever and yet remembering that all our kindred shall pass away.

Again, there is the second act—*weeping*. Every Christian man must weep; but the Apostle says that our sorrows are to be regarded by us, because time is short, *as though they were no sorrows at all*. A man who knows that his trials will not last long, can be cheerful under them. If he sees a Father's hand in the midst of every adversity, and believes that when he is tried he shall come forth like gold from the furnace; if he knows with the Psalmist that "weeping may endure for the night,

but that joy cometh in the morning," why then grief has lost its weight, and sorrow has lost its sting; and while the man weeps he yet rejoices, seeing the rainbow of the covenant painted on the cloud. Happy man, who, under bereavement, under crosses, and losses, can still cast his burden upon God, and can say, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation!" The Christian man is bound to live above his sorrows; he weeps, for "Jesus wept;" he may mourn, for the faithful have been mourners often, but he must not so mourn and weep as to be eaten up with grief; over the tops of the rolling waves he must see the haven of peace, and rejoice evermore.

So is it in the third part. The Christian has his *rejoicings*, and he is not forbidden to be happy; indeed, he is commanded to rejoice; and the things of this life he may freely enjoy with the double zest of the mercy itself, and of the God who gave it to him. But still, believer, in all thy joys, *remember to hold them with a loose hand*. Never so hold thy joys as if they were all in all to thee. Though it be wife, or child, or property, or health, or wealth, or fame, still ever stand ready to surrender all into thy Father's hand, feeling that these, after all, are not thy joys; that thou hast better springs to drink from than those which earth's summers can dry up, and that thou hast rivers of pleasure deeper and broader than any which earth's winter shall be able to freeze. Do thou still stand steadily to this, that, as earth cannot cast thee down to despair, so it cannot lift thee up so as to make thee forget thy God. Learn in these things to rejoice as though thou hadst them not, and let this be thy solace, that thy name is written in heaven.

So, too, in the matter of *buying and possessing*. It is not wrong for a Christian to trade and to trade well. I cannot see any reason why a Christian should be a fool; in fact, those who are fools in business are very often a great dishonor to the Christian religion, for a fool is very often first-cousin, if not father, to a knave. But, still, while we buy and sell it should always be thus—"This is not my real trade; this is not the way in which I really get rich, for my treasure is beyond the skies, where moth devours not, and where rust cannot consume." Handle these things, brethren, knowing that they take to themselves wings and flee away; look at them as transient objects which are to be used and sanctified in the passing, not your own, but lent to you for a time; to be repaid at last, with interest, in the day when the Master saith, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." A man may be as rich as Croesus, and his wealth will never hurt him if he does not hold it with a tight hand; and a man may be as happy as happiness can make him here, and yet it will not hurt him if he learns to keep it under his feet. But oh! when one's rejoicings or possessions get the upper hand of us there is as dreadful a drowning in a sea of pleasure as in a sea of misery. Keep before your mind the words of our sweet singer—

"To thee we owe our wealth and friends,
 And health, and safe abode;
 Thanks to thy name for meaner things,
 But they are not my God.
 What empty things are all the skies,
 And this inferior clod!
 There's nothing here deserves my joys,
 There's nothing like my God."

The last scene is *the using of the things of this life*. The creatures of God are given us to be used. John the Baptist may be an ascetic, but the Son of Man is come eating and drinking. The Christian man knows that the mercies which God has given him are to be used, but while he uses them *he must use them as though he did not use them*. That is a high philosophy which I fear me not many of us have learned, the philosophy of the apostle when he said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound." That man is the fullgrown and true Christian whom circumstances cannot alter! He trusts in God when he is penniless, and he trusts in his God just the same when he is rich; he rests on God when he can enjoy nothing, and he rests on him just the same when he can enjoy everything; he learned to build on the Rock of Ages when he had no comfort, and he builds on the Rock of Ages now, when he has every comfort! This, I take it, is where the apostle would have us brought. To the true Christian the things of this world are only real so far as they involve responsibility; but, seeing that time is short, he looks on life as men look upon a play; he sees a monarch strut, and he says, "Ah! he is to pull off his robes behind the stage!" He sees a peasant or a beggar, and he smiles and thinks of the time when the king and the peasant shall be equal, and the servant and his lord shall stand before one tribunal to give an account of the things done in the body. Send your souls longing after real and unchanging joys, for these splendid, gaudy, shifting scenes, mock the beholder and delude his hopes. Gorgeous as the colors of the bubble, and quite as frail, farewell ye worthless things, our spirit leaves you for eternal mansions in the skies.

III. And now, dear friends, I want your attention a few minutes while I point you to THE CURTAIN WHICH IS SOON TO DROP UPON ALL THESE THINGS, it bears this short device, "TIME IS SHORT."

It is very difficult to keep men in mind of the fact that they are mortal. We confess that we are mortal, but we profess by our actions that we are immortal. Said a man of eighty-two concerning another of seventy, when he wanted to buy his land and could not get it at the price he wished—"Never mind, So-and-so is an old man, he will soon be dead, and then I'll buy it." Though he was ten or twelve years older than the other, yet the other must of course, soon die, while he, in his own thoughts, must live for many a year. How short time is! Do we not, dear friends, get more and more that impression? I am but young compared with very many of you, yet the impression constantly grows upon my mind. Why, it seems but the day before yesterday when I plucked the first early primrose of spring, while the flowers were breaking up from under the earth, and the buds were ready to burst from the sheath! It was only as yesterday that we were walking in the fields and were remarking that the corn was just beginning to be tinged with the golden hue of harvest! Only a few Sabbaths ago I was talking to you of Ruth in the harvest-fields, and of the heavily-laden waggon that was pressed down with sheaves; and now the leaves are almost all gone; but few remain upon the trees; these frosty nights and strong winds have swept the giants of the forest till their limbs are bare, and the hoar frosts plate them with silver. Then, before we shall have time to burn the winter's log, we shall see the snow-drops and the yellow crocus heralding another spring! At what a rate we whirl along! Childhood seems to travel in a waggon, but manhood at express-speed. As we grow older I am told that the speed increases till the gray-headed old man looks back upon all his life as being but a day; and I suppose, if we could live to be a hundred and thirty we should feel the same, till, like Jacob, we should say, "Few and evil have been the days of thy servant!" and, if we could live as long as Methuselah, I doubt not our life would appear shorter still. How time flies, not only by the measurement of the seasons, but by *ourselves*! A few days

ago I trudged with my satchel on my back to school, or joined in boyish sport. How lately was it when the boy became a youth, and must be doing something, and was teaching other boys as he had been taught in his day. It was but yesterday I came to Park Street to address some few of you, and yet how time has fled since then, till now some nine years of our ministry have passed. No weaver's shuttle, no arrow from a bow, no swift post, no meteor seems to fly at a rate so wonderful as does our life! We heard of one the other day who had seen Wesley preach, and so we find ourselves side-by-side with the last century, and those old people have known some others in their youth who told them of the yet older time, and you find that going through the history of some ten or twelve persons you are carried back to the days of William the Conqueror, and you see our country taken by the Normans, and then you fly back to ancient British times as with a thought. You no longer say, "How long the nation has existed!" for it is as a sleep. You stand by some old cliff and see a deposit of shells, and as you remember that it may have taken a million of years to have formed that bed, you think—"What is man? and what is time? It is not here, but gone!" We have only to think of what time is to conclude at once that time is not! It is but a little interlude in the midst of the vast eternity; a narrow neck of land jutting out into the great, dread, and unfathomable sea of everlastingness!

But while time is thus short, *its end is absolutely sure*. That curtain yonder must fall soon! *It must fall*; it is inevitable. I cannot prevent my death by the most regular habits of life; the most skillful physician cannot preserve my life for me; a host of angels, should they swear to make me immortal, could not! When the time comes, die I must! And, as my death is inevitable, so it may be *very near*. Let each man remember that! How soon it may be we cannot tell! Every Sabbath there are some in this house who are dead before the next Sabbath. I am not now venturing a guess; it is a matter of fact, a matter of fact, too, that comes under my own cognizance very frequently. According to our population and the gradual number of deaths, there must be some out of this congregation here this morning who will have gone the way of all flesh before next Sabbath-day! There was one—I look at her seat now, and a brother sitting near by looks there with sorrow!—who was with us one Sabbath-day, and we soon heard that she had gone to enjoy the Eternal Sabbath! At a Church-meeting last week, no less than three of our sisters were reported as having fallen asleep in Jesus within a week. Ah! how near is death to us! Perhaps he now stands looking over thy shoulder, young man; God holds back his hand, but the dart of death is close to thy heart, and soon,—ah, how soon!—may you be taken to the place appointed for all living! Go, thou strong man, and remember that thou art a mass of feebleness! Go, thou young man, and remember that death reaps green corn! Go, thou old man, and expect the sickle! And go, thou rich man, and remember that thou shalt soon leave everything that thou hast, and then where art thou if thou hast no treasure in heaven, if thou hast not laid up in store for immortality?

And I must add here that, to those who have no God, death, while inevitable and very near, *will be most awful and tremendous!* There was a dreadful story told in the papers of this last week. At the seaport town of Garliestown one day last week, certain workmen were busy preparing a better berth for a vessel which seems to have taken the ground a little too soon. On a sudden some one raised a cry that the ship was listing over, and while some four men were able to escape, one poor fellow was unable to do so, and the ship fell upon his lower extremities and loins. Now this was thought, perhaps, to be no great danger, for they could take away the sludge and extricate him. So they began to shore the ship, and willing hands brought ropes and blocks, and wedges, and earnest strength. But they soon discovered that the thing was impossible from the nature of the bottom of

the river, and from the position of the cargo, which, I suppose, they could not speedily remove. The man was jammed under the bulwarks, and must remain fixed there without hope. There was just one awful hour before the coming tide would reach the spot. Well might a solemn hush succeed the frantic labors of the townsmen as death was seen riding on the advancing flood. The poor creature had to lie there that hour as the tide came gently in. A minister stood his side praying with him; let us trust that his soul found peace with God! But O the terror of his position; well might he say, "Cover my head, that I may not see the water." Steadily the cold un pitying waters flowed on until a corpse was hidden where an hour or so before a strong man labored. This is a graphic picture of the position of every ungodly man! He does not know it, but the waves of time are coming up about him now, and *we* cannot help him to escape. The load of his sins is on his loins: he cannot deliver himself; the great waters of God's wrath must swallow him up quick. O, sinner, would that I could save thee! Alas, it is not in my power! But there is an arm that can deliver thee; there is one who can lift the burden off thee, and say to thee, "Be free!" Believe in him and thou shalt never die! Trust thou in his power and rest thyself on his love, and thou shalt escape as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; and when death cometh it shall be no death to thee, but a peaceful migration from the land of shadows to the world of substance. God help us to be wise, that we may remember our latter end!

I would say a few more words to the sinner. I cannot think, O worldling, why thou shouldst love this world so much when it is so soon to vanish! In the old Greek cities they had a king every year, and, because it was so poor a thing to be a king for only one year and then to be a common man again, all the citizens dreaded to be kings. How canst thou long to be rich, when thou art only to be rich for so short a time? When the sailor is just about to furl his sail because he is near the port, he will not fret himself with some little inconvenience in the ship; and wherefore art thou so sore vexed with all these little trials, when thou art so near the eternal haven? When men buy property on a short lease, they will not give much for it, for they are only to have it for a brief term; wherefore spendest thou thy soul to buy this world? What will it profit thee, if thou gain it, if thy soul be lost? When men have a house and they are soon to leave it, they will not lay out much in repairing it; wherefore, then, caress thou so much for thy body? Why mindest thou so much *this* life; the bell is even now trembling to toll for thee, and the grave is yawning that it may swallow thee up? Oh man! Oh man! I would that thou wert wise! Thou art to live for ever, for ever, for ever, either

"In flames that no abatement know,
Though briny tears for ever flow."

or else in joy beyond degree. Which shall it be with thee, man? If thou diest as thou art, O sinner, remember, there remaineth nothing for thee but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation! I pray thee by the love of God, to consider thy ways. Thus saith the Lord unto thee this day by my lips, as truly as he spake to Hezekiah by the prophet of old, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." How wilt thou stand, sinner, in the day when the Lord cometh to make inquisition for sin, and to avenge their iniquity upon the heads of the unpardoned? Fly, sinner; God help thee by his grace to fly now to yonder open door, where Jesus waits to receive thee and to put away thy sin. Whosoever believeth on him is not condemned. Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of man is lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

IV. Come, come, ye wise men, rise and leave this theater, we have seen enough of it. "The fashion of this world passeth away;" and for you and for me happy shall it be when it shall have passed away for ever. But is there nothing real? Can I do nothing real here? Is there nothing I can do that shall last for ever? Yes, *the soul* is lasting. Then let me see to my own soul. Let me make my calling and election sure, for I shall have been of all fools the most mad, if I shall have trifled with these things and yet have neglected my soul. The Roman emperor, Claudius, once invaded Great Britain, but his performance only consisted of gathering pebbles and shells from the sea-coast. This shall be my triumph, this my sole reward, if here in this world I live only to gather wealth. At the last I shall be as though I gathered pebbles, for these things shall be of no value to me if my soul shall perish. O Lord, by thy rich grace set me upon a sure foundation, and make me right before thy face.

Yes, there are some real things besides my own soul. There are *other men's souls*. What am I doing for them? Am I teaching, am I preaching, or, if I am not doing this, am I helping others to preach? Am I doing my best to add to the kingdom of Christ by the ingathering of immortals? Have I a sphere in the ragged school or in tract distributing, or am I helping in some way or other to do good? For, if not, my life is a play, I am doing nothing real; I am only hurrying here and there, and when it comes to the last I shall have been as a workman that has neglected his own work to play with children in the streets! Dig up your buried talents, O idlers. Work while it is called to-day, O ye who are given to slumber.

Yes, there is something real—*there is Christ's Church*. The Church that is to shine like the stars in heaven for ever, the Bride of the Lamb—what am I doing for Her? Do I seek the good of Jerusalem? As a member of the Church, do I contribute to its strength? Do I give of my substance to her efforts, and of my talents to her doings? Do I cast myself wholly into the arms of Christ, and work for him! Yes, there is something real—*Jesus is so*. Am I glorifying him here on earth? When I see him in his poor people, do I feed him? When he shivers at my door in the garb of poverty, do I clothe him? When I know that he hath need, do I visit him? If so, I am doing real things. If I devote my life to God, to Christ, to his Church, to the souls of men, and if my own soul is saved, then I am living; but if not, I am dead while I live. "*Let us live while we live!*" Alas! how many are dying while they live, drivelling while they live! Oh! the scores of pounds we spend on ourselves; the hundreds we give to our own comfort! And where is that? It is gone like smoke! But that which is given to God lasts and endures; it is treasured up in God's bank; that which is given to the poor and needy is made—though unrighteous mammon—to be treasured up in heaven! But I know many practical persons will say, "Yes, this is a very pretty speech for a young minister; but these ministers do not understand business; they cannot be expected to understand temporal matters." I would to God ye understood them half so well, for our understanding in this matter we know is sound; and when you shall come to see these things in the light of eternity streaming between the curtains of your dying bed, you will understand, then, that there was nothing worth living for but God, and Christ, and his Church; and you will give your verdict then with mine to this, that truly to live must be Christ, or else to die never can be gain!

God add his blessing, and may some be led to trust in Jesus this morning!

The Royal Pair in Their Glorious Chariot

A Sermon

(No. 482)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, November 30th, 1862, by

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."—Solomons Song 3:6-11.

GREAT PRINCES IN THE EAST are in the habit of travelling in splendid palanquins, which are at the same time chariots and beds. The person reclines within, screened by curtains from public view; a body-guard protects the equipage from robbers, and blazing torches light up the path along which the travelers proceed. King Solomon, in this Song, describes the Church of Christ, and Christ himself, as travelling through the world in such a palanquin. The day is coming when both our divine Lord and his chosen bride shall be revealed in glory before the eyes of all men. The present age is the period of concealment—the mystical Solomon and his beloved Solyma are both on earth, but they are unseen of men; like the ark of old they dwell within curtains; only the anointed priests of God can discern their beauties, and even these gaze rather by faith than by sight. "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," is certainly true, for Jesus is here; but equally correct is that word of Peter, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." He is here in the reality, power, and influence of his presence, but he is not here as to the visibility of his kingdom and person, for we wait with our loins girt about, and with patience of hope, until the revelation of Jesus Christ. The portion of the blessed canticle now before us is, we think, descriptive of the progress of the hidden Christ through the world. He has been borne along, in very truth, but he himself has been so little perceived of men, that they even ask the question, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?" He is not now manifested openly to men. If any should say, "Lo here!" or "Lo there! this is Christ!" believe them not, for Christ is not as yet seen. When he doth come he shall be as perceptible as the lightning's flash, which every man's eye discerneth without the need of an instructor. So, also, with his true Church. She also is hidden like her Lord, and though her hand, her foot, or her face may be sometimes seen, yet the whole elect body has never yet been beheld. If any say, "Lo, here is the Church of Christ!" or "Lo there!" believe them not, for it is a fact that there is no corporation of men of which we can say exclusively or even universally, "Lo, this is the Church of Christ." There are tares growing with the wheat in the best guarded field, and on the other hand no one enclosure contains all the wheat. The true Church of Christ is scattered here and there, it is found amongst

all denominations, and there is not one denomination of which you can say, "This only is the Church of Christ, or all its members belong to the body of Christ's spouse." Just now the mystical bride is in a certain sense as invisible as her husband. Behold, then, the betrothed ones carried through the world in the sumptuous chariot of which we have to speak this morning.

I must now claim your attention while I notice, first, *the glory of the progress of Christ through the world, as described in the sixth verse*; secondly, *the security of Christ's cause, as represented in thy seventh and eighth*; thirdly, *the superlative excellence of it, as described in the ninth and tenth*; and lastly, *our joyful duties with regard to it, as openly declared in the eleventh*.

I. First, then, THE MAGNIFICENT PROGRESS, THE GLORIOUS ON-GOING OF THE CHURCH AND HER LORD THROUGH THE WORLD.

"Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" The equipage excites the attention of the on-looker; his curiosity is raised, and he asks, "*Who is this?*" Now, in the first progress of the Christian Church, in her very earliest days, there were persons who marvelled greatly; and though they set down the wonders of the day of Pentecost to drunkenness, yet "they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" In after years, many a heathen philosopher said, "What is this new power which is breaking the idols in pieces, changing old customs, making even thrones unsafe-what is this?" By-and-bye, in the age of the Reformation, there were cowed monks, cardinals in their red hats, and bishops, and princes, and emperors, who all said, "What is this? What strange doctrine has come to light?" In the times of the modern reformation, a century ago, when God was pleased to revive his Church through the instrumentality of Whitfield and his brethren, there were many who said, "What is this new enthusiasm, this Methodism? Whence came it, and what power is this which it wields?" And, doubtless, whenever God shall be pleased to bring forth his Church in power, and to make her mighty among the sons of men, the ignorance of men will be discovered breaking forth in yonder, for they will say, "Who is this?" Spiritual religion is as much a novelty now as in the day when Grecian sages scoffed at it on Mars' Hill. The true Church of God is a stranger and pilgrim still; an alien and a foreigner in every land; a speckled bird; a dove in the midst of ravens; a lily among thorns.

The ignorance of men concerning spiritual things is not, however, caused by the darkness of the things themselves, for Christ and his Church are *the great lights of the world*. When great personages traveled in their palanquins, and more especially on marriage processions, they were attended by a number of persons who, at night, carried high up in the air burning cressets which gave forth a blaze of light. Sometimes these lights were simply torches carried in the hands of running footmen; at other times they were a sort of iron basket lifted high into the air, upon poles, from which went up a pillar of smoke and flame. Our text says "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke?" a beautiful illustration of the fact that wherever Christ and his cause are carried, light is a sure accompaniment. Into whatsoever region the gospel may journey, her every herald is a flash of light, her every minister a flaming fire. God maketh his Churches the golden candlesticks, and saith unto his children "Ye are the lights of the world," is certainly as ever God said "Let there be light," and there was light over the old creation, so does he say, whenever his Church advances, "Let there be light" and there is light. Dens of darkness, where the bats of superstition had folded their wings and hung themselves up for perpetual ease, have been disturbed by the glare of these divine flambeaux; the innermost caverns of superstition and sin, once black with a darkness which might be felt, have been visited with a light above the brightness of the sun.

"The people which sat in darkness have seen a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light has sprung up." Thus saith the Lord unto the nation where his kingdom cometh, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord hath risen upon thee!" Bear ye the Church of Christ to the South Seas; carry Christ and his spouse in his palanquin to the Caffre, the Hottentot, or the Esquimaux, and everywhere the night of death is ended, and the morning with its glorious dawn has come. High lift your lamps, ye servants of our Lord. High lift up the cross of the Redeemer; for in him is light, and the light in the life of men.

But you will tell me that our text rather speaks of "*pillars of smoke*" than of sparkling lamps. Brethren, the smoke is but the effect of the flame, and even the pillar of smoke is luminous. What is the smoke that has attended the Church? What but the deaths of her martyrs, the sufferings of her confessors, the patient endurance of her valiant sons? Wherever she goes, the thick smoke of her suffering goeth up to heaven. "We are always delivered unto death," said the apostle. The cause of truth involves a perpetual sacrifice; her smoke ascendeth for ever. Black smoke I say it is in the eye of man, but unto God it is a sweet-smelling savor. Never did fat of rams, or the fat of kidnies of fed beasts, smell so sweetly before the Most High as the faith, the love, the courage, which has ascended up to heaven from the dauntless heroes of the Church in past ages when at the stake they have been faithful even unto death. Suffering, and grief, and woe are the lot of the spouse of the despised and rejected Savior, but all these are as things of nought if thereby she may scatter that terrible blackness which blinds the face of man and makes him a stranger to his God.

It often happens that oriental monarchs of immense possessions, are not content with burning common coals in these cressets, but frequently consume sandal-wood and other woods which give forth a delightful smell; or else, if they use ordinary coals, they sprinkle upon them frankincense and myrrh, so that a delicious perfume is spread on all sides. In the olden times, they also went to great expense in obtaining drugs, which the merchants collected from all parts of the earth, and these were carefully compounded into the renowned "*powders of the merchants*," which yielded a delicious variety of delicate perfumes, not to be produced by any one aromatic essence. Our inspired poet describes the travelling procession of the royal pair and fails not to dwell upon the delightful perfume of myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant, "which make the wilderness smell as a garden of roses." Wherever the Church of Christ proceeds, though her pathway is a desert, though she marches through a howling wilderness, she scatters the richest perfume. The page of history were only worthy to be blotted in oblivion were it not for the sweet odours which the Church has left upon it. Look at all past ages, and the track of the Church is still redolent with all the richest fragrance of human virtue and divine grace. Wherever the Church advances she makes manifest the savor of the knowledge of Christ in every place! Men believe in Jesus, and unto the Lord faith has all the fragrance of myrrh. They love Jesus; and love in the esteem of heaven is better than frankincense. Loving Christ they endeavor to be like him, till patience, humility, brotherly-kindness, truthfulness, and all things that are honest, lovely, and of good repute, like "*powders of the merchant*," are spread abroad throughout the whole earth. Tell me where the Church is not, and I will tell you where sin reigns; tell me where Christ and his Church are carried, and I will tell you where you shall find every virtue that can adorn humanity, and every excellence that can magnify the excellence of the grace of God. If you would find an antidote for the deadly exhalations which lurk among this world's deserts of sin, if you would destroy the foul pestilence which reigns in the darkness of heathenism, of Popery, and of infidelity, cry unto the Mighty One—"Arise, thou unknown traveler, arise, and bid thy servants carry thee into the midst of all this

misery and death! The light of thy flaming torches shall scatter the darkness, and the burning of thy precious perfumes shall say unto evil—'Fold thy wings!' and unto the pestilence of sin—'Get thee back unto thy den!'"

Among the ten wonders which Jewish tradition ascribes to the temple, we find that the rain never extinguished the fire of the wood which was laid in order upon the altar, nor did the wind ever conquer the pillar of smoke so as to disperse or bend it. Verily it is so with the Church of God, as she cometh out of the wilderness: who shall quench her flaming lamp, or stay the incense of her golden censers? Ride on, Great Prince, and bear thy spouse with thee in thy majestic chariot, till thou hast lit the world with thy divine light, and hast made it a temple filled with a cloud of incense of sweet smell to the nostrils of Jehovah!

II. We have, secondly, to notice THE SECURITY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH AT ALL TIMES.

Of course when travelling through a wilderness, a royal procession was always in danger of attack. Arabs prowled around; wandering Bedouins were always prepared to fall upon the caravan; and more especially was this the case with a marriage procession, because then the robbers might expect to obtain many jewels, or, if not, a heavy ransom for the redemption of the bride or bridegroom by their friends. What shall I say of the attacks which have been made upon the Church of Christ, and upon Christ himself? They have been incessant. When one form of evil has been routed, another has presented itself. Evil teems with children. The frogs and lice of Egypt were not more numerous than the enemies of the Lord's anointed and his bride. Every day produces new battles. These attacks arise from all quarters; sometimes from the world, and sometimes, alas! from even professed members of the Church. Adversaries lurk everywhere, and until the Church and her Lord shall be revealed in the splendor of the Millennium, having left the wilderness for ever, we must expect to find her molested on every side. My dear brethren, we know that Christ's cause in the world is always safe because of divine protection, and because the legions of God's angels keep watch and ward over the saints. But we have something more tangible than this. Our gracious God has been pleased to commit unto *men* the ministry of Christ. "Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." The Lord ordaineth that chosen men should be the protectors of his Church; not that they have any power as of themselves to do anything, but He girdeth the weak with strength and maketh the feeble mighty; so then, men, even the sons of men stand in array around the travelling palanquin of Christ, to guard both the bridegroom and the bride.

Read the 7th and 8th verses carefully, and you will notice *that there are enough swordsmen*. "Threescore valiant men are about it." There are always enough men chosen of God to guard the Church. Poor Unbelief holds up her hands and cries—"Ah! the good men are all dead; Zion is under a cloud; the Lord hath taken away the great men; we have no valiant defenders of the faith, none such as this crisis may require!" Ah! Unbelief, let the Lord say unto thee as he did unto Elias—"Yet have I left me seven-thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." There shall be just as many warriors as the crisis shall require. We do not know where the men are to come from, but the Lord will provide. There may be sitting in the Sunday school to-day a child who shall one day shake this nation from one end to the other; there may be even here, unknown, obscure, and unobserved, the man whom God will make strong to rebuke the infamous infidelity of our age. We know not where the anointing rests. We, in our folly, would anoint Eliab or Abinadab, but God hath chosen David, the shepherd's boy, and he will bring him forth and teach him how to hurl the stone at Goliath's brow. Tremble not, neither be ye afraid; God who makes man and makes man's mouth, will find the sixty men when the sixty shall be needed. "The Lord gave the word, great was

the company of them that published it." The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Observe that these warriors *are men of the right mettle*. "Yes," says poor trembling Little-Faith, "we have hosts of men, but they are not like the greathearts of old; they have not the qualifications which the age requires." Ah! but remember, about the bed of Solomon there are "threescore *valiant* men;" and glory be unto my Master, while I may not flatter the ministry, I must not dishonor him by believing that he has left his Church without *valiant* defenders. There are Luthers still living who bid defiance to all adversaries; men who can say, "We count not our lives dear unto us that we may finish our course with joy, and fulfill the ministry which the Lord hath delivered unto us." Fear not; you may not at present know the valor of the Lord's body-guard, but when the Church's battle grows hotter than just now, suddenly there shall be seen a champion stalking to the front of the battle, and men shall say, "Who is this? How he wields that battle-axe! How he splits the armor of his foes! See how he piles them heaps on heaps, and mounts that hill of slaughtered enemies to smite a greater foe! Who is this?" And the answer shall be, "This is a man whom God hath found; the world knew not of him, but God has trained him in the camps of Dan, and now the Spirit moveth him to smite the Philistines.

"Ah!" I think I hear you say, "but though there may be so many men, and men of the right sort, I am afraid *they are not in the right place*." Look again at the text. It is written—"Threescore valiant men are ABOUT IT;" that is, there are some on that side, and some on this, some before, and some behind; they are all round the travelling chariot of Christ. "I wish there might be one in our parish," says one. Pray for him, and he who has promised to send you all good things may yet send him to you. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he may send forth laborers into his harvest." It is singular how God sometimes raises a mighty man, in this denomination, then in that, and then in the other. Suppose any body of Christians should try to monopolize all the valiant men themselves; why, they could not do it, because every side of the royal bed must be guarded, and in his own place each man is set for the defense of the gospel. The Church is compassed about with mighties, who are under God to do great exploits. If the Lord guides the flight of sparrows, surely he knows how to dispose his ministers; and let the Church be well content to let them occupy their posts until the wilderness is past, and the glory shall be revealed. The Church often makes mistakes, and thinks she can make ministers, or at least choose their position. She can do no such thing. God sends the valiant man; all you can do is to recognize his valor, and accept him as your champion; beyond that you cannot go; this is God's work, not man's. A minister made by men, made valiant by human strength, had better betake himself at once ignominiously to his tent, for his disgrace will be certain. God who sends the men, knows where to put them, so that they may stand round about the bed, and leave no corner unprotected.

Notice that these men *are all well armed*. The text says expressly, "They all hold swords." What swords are these? Every valiant man in Christ's Israel holds the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. A man who is a good textuary will usually be a good divine; he who draws from the treasury of the written word will find his spoken word to be fruitful in profit to the people of God. If we use carnal reason; if we rely upon refinement, argument, eloquence, or any other form of the wisdom of man, we shall soon find our enemies will defeat us; but to ply the Word right and left; to give gospel cuts and strokes such as the devil himself cannot parry, this is to overcome the world through the Word of God. Besides this, and here is an opportunity for you all to carry swords—every valiant man in God's Israel carries the sword of prayer, which is comparable to those huge

two-handed swords of the olden time, which the soldier lifted up and brought down with such tremendous force, as to cleave a man in halves: prayer is a weapon which no man can effectually resist. If you know how to use it, bring it down upon your foeman's head, and woe unto him! I would to God that in this Church there were found many of these valiant men of Israel! Indeed, would God all the Lord's servants were prophets, that it might be said of all of you that you hold swords. Your holy lives can be swords with which to smite your enemies. The tongues with which you speak of Christ lovingly, tenderly, persuasively—these may be weapons against our common enemy. Oh that when we hear the muster roll at last, it may be said of every Church-member that he held a sword! Do not tremble, ye timid ones, for the ark of the Lord; neither let your fears promote your unbelief; God knows full well how to give the right weapons to the right men, and his Church shall be secure even to the end.

Further, my brethren, these men are not only well armed, *but thy are well trained*. They are all expert in war; men who have endured temptations themselves; men whose souls have been exercised, men who have slain both the lion and the bear, and are men of war from their youth. Christian ministers especially should be no novices, but both in the school of temptation, and in some school of the prophets, they should be disciplined for fight. May there be such found here! I look out daily for such among you as are taught of God, and much of my time is spent with our young soldiers to make them expert in war. O that the Lord would hear my prayers and bless our college with men, and means, and above all with his Spirit. Fools are not the men for this age. We want a sound knowledge of doctrine, practical power in preaching, and a thorough insight into the human heart; and where these by earnest prayer can be found in a man and further developed by careful teaching, we are bound to give our aid. Such men should be looked after, and no pains should be spared to bring them forth; in fact, dear friends, you ought to think it a high honor to be allowed to help in putting such men into working order. Oh! how I groan to get my friends to feel the importance of sending out trained young ministers. I give my time and my substance cheerfully, but when will the Christian Church help in this matter as it should?

Further, these men were not only well-trained, but you will see *that they were always ready*. Each man has his sword upon his thigh, ready to be drawn forth. I know some nominal ministers who seem to me to carry no sword at all. They keep a sheath, a very handsome sheath, with a hilt at the top and a stick inside. What is the good of such men? We want men to have *swords* in their sheaths, men who can speak with power, and have the demonstration of the Spirit and the power thereof resting upon them. Such men should wear their swords where they are to be got at, so that when the adversary comes they may dash at him at once. Rejoice, O daughter of Zion, thy Lord hath not left thee, even at this day, without some such men!

Observe also that these men were *watchful*, for "they had their sword on their thigh because of fear *in the night*." They never sleep, but watch always for the Church's interest. Pray ye that the Lord may raise up many such, who night and day with tears shall watch for the souls of men, and against the enemies of our Israel.

Dear friends, some of you may at times be alarmed when you hear of attacks made upon the Bible. At one time it was thought that ethnology would prove that the human race could not be one; and Moses was terribly abused by some who said it was not possible that all of us could have come of one pair. That battle was fought, and you hear nothing of it now; it is over; learning and argument in the hand of God has routed those antagonists. Then they pelted us with shells, and bones of lizards. Geology threatened to dig our graves; but we have lived all through that struggle, and we

have found geology to be a great blessing, for it has shed a new light on the first chapter of Genesis, and made us understand a great deal better what it meant. Another Amalekite advances to combat; this time it is with figures and numbers; we are to be speared with arithmetic, and slain with algebra! And what will be the result of it? Why, it will do the Bible a world of good, for we shall understand it better. I thank God whenever the Bible is attacked; for all those who know the times and seasons, begin to study just that part of Scripture more carefully, and then we get a clearer light shed upon it, and we find ourselves more confirmed than ever that this is the very truth, and that God hath revealed it to us. "Well, but who will take this matter up?" I do not know, and I do not particularly care, but I know my Master has his threescore valiant men round about his bed, and that each man has his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night, and never mind what the battle may be, the end of it will be for God's glory, and there shall be progress with the chariot of Christ through that which seemed as if it must overthrow it. Cast aside your fears; rejoice, and be glad, O daughter of Zion! Thy Lord is with thee in the travelling chariot, and the threescore valiant men are watching against thy foes.

III. Meanwhile, reposing in peace, let us notice THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS CHARIOT IN WHICH JESUS RIDES.

It is not difficult to convey to persons the most unacquainted with Eastern manners and customs, an idea of what this palanquin is. It is a sort of large sedan in which one or two persons may recline with ease. Of course, this palanquin could not be made of gold or silver, because then it would be too heavy for carriage; it must be made of wood; hence King Solomon made a bed, or chariot, or palanquin, of the wood of Lebanon. Then there needs to be four pillars supporting the covering and the curtains; the pillars thereof are of silver. The bottom of it should be something massive, in order to sustain the weight of the person; the bottom thereof is of gold. The canopy on the top, is a covering of purple. Since to lie on gold would be very unpleasant, it is covered with delicate, daintily wrought carpets; and so we have the bottom thereof paved, or rather carpeted with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. Some delicate devices of needlework adorn the bottom of this bed-chariot in which the king and his spouse recline during their journey.

The doctrines of the gospel are comparable, for their antiquity, for their sweet fragrance, for their incorruptibility, to the wood of Lebanon. The gospel of Christ never decays; Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Not one single truth, bears any sign of rot. And to those souls that are enlightened from above, the gospel gives forth a fragrance far richer than the wood of Lebanon.

"No beams of cedar or of fir,

Can with thy precious truth compare."

I rejoice to know concerning you as a Church, that the more you understand the doctrines of grace the better you love them. You are confirmed in the present faith, and well you may be, for our doctrine is worthy of your confidence. We are not afraid that any truth which Christ has uttered should be tried by the most stringent criticism, for not one single stone of all the bulwarks of Gospel doctrine can ever be removed out of its place. When cedars of Lebanon have yielded to the worm, even then shall the truth as it is in Jesus remain the same.

As for the silver pillars which bear up the canopy, to what should I liken them but to *the attributes of God* which support and guarantee the efficiency of the great atonement of Christ beneath which we are sheltered. There is the silver pillar of God's *justice*. He cannot, he will not smite the soul that hides beneath the cross of Christ. If Christ hath paid the debt, how is it possible that God should

visit again a second time the iniquity of his people, first on their Surety, and then again on themselves? Then stands the next, the solid pillar of his *power*. "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand; my Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Then on the other side is the pillar of his *love*, a silver pillar indeed, bright and sparkling to the eye; love unchanging and eternal, strong as the power and fast as the justice which bear up the canopy on the other side. And here on this side stands *immutability*, another column upon which the atonement rests. If God could change, then might he cast away his blood-bought; but "because I am God and change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob rejoice." As for the *covering of the chariot*, it is of purple. I need not tell you where it was dyed. No Tyrian hues are mingled here. Look up, Christian, and delight thyself in that blood-red canopy which shelters thee from the sun by day and from the moon by night! From hell and heaven, from time and from eternity, art thou secured by this covering which is of purple. Oh! tempting theme to dilate upon the precious and glorious doctrine of atonement! Whenever our adversaries assail the Church, whatever may be the apparent object of their animosity, their real one is always the same, a desperate hatred to the great truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Well, as *they* hate it, let *us* love it; and under it let us take our greatest delight.

As for the *bottom of this palanquin*, which is of gold,—may not this represent the eternal purpose and counsel of God, that purpose which he formed in himself or ever the earth was? Pure was the decree of God, holy, wise, just, for his own glory, and most true; and as the precious things of the temple were all of gold, well may the basis of eternal love, an immutable and unchangeable decree, be compared to much fine gold. I do not know, brethren, how it is with you, but I find it most pleasant to have as the basis of my hope, the firm decree of God. Atonement covers me, I know, but still on this I must rest, Jehovah wills it; God decrees it; he hath said it, and it must be done; he hath commanded and it standeth fast. Oh! that golden sovereignty, whereon is written—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth." Dear brethren, the Apostle plainly tells us that this is the basis on which even the silver pillars rest, "for he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as he hath chosen us in him from before the foundation of the world."

Then, to make this all soft and pleasant to recline upon, here is pavement of needlework. Soft cushions of love on which to rest. There is a double meaning here, for both the bride and bridegroom find rest in love. Our Lord finds rest in the love of his people. "Here will I dwell for ever." They do, as it were, make these carpets of needle-work in their love and affection for him, and in their trust and confidence in him; and here he rests. On the other hand, our Beloved spent his life to work for us our bed of rest, so that we must translate it "love *of*," as well as love *for* the daughters of Jerusalem." *We* rest in Christ's love; *he* rests in our love. Come, I need not explain further, brothers and sisters. Take your rest now to the full. You are married unto Christ; you are one with him; betrothed unto him in faithfulness, embraced in the arms of his affection. Fear not the noise of archers; the "threescore valiant men" protect you, and the king himself embraces you; now solace yourself with him; take your full of his sweet society, and say unto him from the bottom of your heart, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." Leave fighting for the evidences to the valiant men who can do it; as for you, ye daughters of Jerusalem, rest upon your Lord's bosom; leave conflict to the men ordained to fight, the men expert in war; as for you, be you expert in communion; understand the motions of Jesus' heart; look unto the lustre of his

loving eyes; behold his beauties; be ravished with his divine affection to you; and now let your soul be satisfied with favor, and be full of the lovingkindness of the Lord!

IV. We close, then, by noticing THE DUTY OF EVERY BELIEVING HEART newest in connection with the subject.

Let every believer, while he recognizes himself as part of the Church inside the palanquin, yet look upon himself personally as one of the daughters of Zion, and let us each *go forth* this morning to meet King Solomon. It is not King David; King David is the type of Christ up to the time of his crucifixion—"despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and yet King of the Jews. King Solomon is the type of Christ ever since the day when

"They brought his chariot from above,
To bear him to his throne."

and, with sound of trumpet, conducted him to his Father's presence-chamber above. Now it is King Solomon; King Solomon for wealth, for wisdom, for dignity, for honor, for peace. He is the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and therefore is he King Solomon going forth. Get up from your beds of sloth; rise from your chambers of ease; go forth, go forth to pray, to labor, to suffer; go forth to live in purity, leaving Babylon behind; go forth to walk with him alone, leaving even your kinsfolk and acquaintance if they will not follow with you. Wherefore tarriest thou at home when the King is abroad? "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, come ye forth to meet him," *and behold King Solomon*. To-day let your eye rest upon him. Let your eye behold the head that to-day is crowned with glory, wearing many crowns. Behold ye, too, his hands which once were pierced, but are now grasping the scepter. Look to his girdle where swing the keys of heaven, and death, and hell. Look to his feet, once pierced with iron, but now set upon the dragon's head. Behold his legs, like fine brass, as if they glowed in a furnace. Look at his heart, that bosom which heaves with love to you, and when you have surveyed him from head to foot exclaim, "Yea, he is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." Does sin prevail? Behold King Solomon. Have doubts and fears arisen? Behold King Jesus. Are you troubled, and does your enemy annoy you? Look up to him, behold king Solomon. I pray you remember the light in which you are to behold him. Do not think that Christ has lost his former power. Behold him as he was at Pentecost, *with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals*. Oh! how glorious was our Lord when the Church crowned him with her zeal, and the arrows went abroad, and three thousand fell slain by his right hand to be made alive by the breath of his mouth! Oh, how these early saints crowned him, when they brought of their substance and laid it at the apostle's feet, neither did any man count that ought he had was his own. They crowned him with their heart's purest love; the Church had on her brow her bridal-wreath, and her husband wore his nuptial crown. Behold him to-day as wearing that crown still, for he is the same Christ, and do you go forth to meet him, and labor for him, and love him as the first saints did.

Forget not that his mother is to crown him soon in the day of his espousals. He is our brother as well as our husband, and the Church is *his* mother as well as ours. Oh! she is to crown him soon! The day of his espousals draweth nigh. Hark! I hear the trumpet sound! Jesus comes, and his feet stand upon Mount Olivet; kings and princes lick the dust before him; he gathers sheaves of sceptres beneath his arm even as the mower gathereth wheat with the sickle. He treadeth on principalities and powers, the young lion and the dragon doth he trample under foot. And now his saints cry, "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The long-expected one is come, and

his mother crowns him in the day of his espousals! Courage, poor heart, courage! Go forth and see King Solomon to-day as he is to lie, and remember,

"It doth not yet appear
How great we shall be made;
But when we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head."

When we look on *Him*; let us rejoice that this is to be our glory. We are to put off this sackcloth and put on scarlet and fine linen. The dust is to be wiped from our brow and the sweat from our face; the shackles are to be taken from our wrist, and the gyves from our legs; and we are to be emancipated, ennobled, glorified, made partners with Christ in all his splendor, and taught to reign with him world without end.

But there are some here that I can hardly call the daughters of Jerusalem, yet they are always round about Zion's gate. Oh, there are many of you who are always listening to our voice, and joining in our hymns, and yet you have not seen our Master yet! Go forth; leave your sinful pleasures, and leave your self-righteousness too; go forth and behold King Solomon. Look to Jesus, sinner, bleeding on the cross, and as thou lookest, love and trust; and I know that as soon as thou hast seen him and trusted him, thou wilt have a crown to put upon his head. It will be the day of thine espousal unto him, and thou wilt crown him with such a crown. Thou wilt decorate that crown with jewels dug from the secret mine of thy deepest heart, and having made this crown, thou wilt put it on his head, and fall down before him and sing—

"All hail the power of Jesu's name,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all."

Well, then, we will lay aside every fear, and continue all the day gazing upon our matchless Christ, adoring him, exalting him, and having fellowship with him; for all is well; his travelling chariot is always safe, and soon will he step out of it with his bride at his right hand, and the world shall be astonished to behold the beauties of the royal pair when he shall be exalted, and they that are with him, before the presence of his Father and all the holy angels!

Indexes

Index of Scripture References

Genesis

28:15

Deuteronomy

31:6 32:47

Joshua

1:5

1 Chronicles

28:20

Job

14:14 30:25

Song of Solomon

3:6-11

Isaiah

41:17 53:12

Lamentations

4:22

Ezekiel

36:26

Romans

5:6

1 Corinthians

7:29-31

Hebrews

2:10 13:5

Revelation

22:17

Index of Scripture Commentary

Deuteronomy

32:47

Job

14:14 30:25

Song of Solomon

3:6-11

Isaiah

53:12

Lamentations

4:22

Ezekiel

36:26

Romans

5:6

1 Corinthians

7:29-31

Hebrews

13:5

Revelation

22:17