



Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 20: 1874

by

Charles Spurgeon

About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 20: 1874* by Charles Spurgeon

Title: Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 20: 1874
URL: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons20.html>
Author(s): Spurgeon, Charles Haddon (1834-1892)
Publisher: Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library
Date Created: 2002-08-27
CCEL Subjects: All; Sermons;
LC Call no: BV42
LC Subjects: Practical theology
Worship (Public and Private) Including the church year, Christian symbols, liturgy, prayer, hymnology
Times and Seasons. The church year

Table of Contents

<i>About This Book</i>	p. ii
Sermon 1162. Saving Faith.	p. 1
Sermon 1185. An Earnest Warning about Lukewarmness.	p. 11
Sermon 1186. The Blood of the Covenant.	p. 21
Sermon 1187. The Three Witnesses.	p. 31
Sermon 1188. A Word for the Persecuted.	p. 41
Sermon 1189. The Turning Point.	p. 51
Sermon 1190. A Song Among the Lilies.	p. 61
Sermon 1191. For Whom Did Christ Die?.	p. 71
Indexes.	p. 81
Index of Scripture References.	p. 81
Index of Scripture Commentary.	p. 81

Saving Faith

A Sermon

(No. 1162-3)

Delivered on Lord's Day Morning, March 15, 1874, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Thy faith hath saved thee.”—Luke 7:50; and Luke 18:42.

I do not remember that this expression is found anywhere else in the Word of God. It is found in these two places in the Gospel by Luke, but not in any other Gospel. Luke also gives us in two other places a kindred, and almost identical expression, “Thy faith hath made thee whole.” This you will find used in reference to the woman whose issue of blood had been staunched (Luke 8:48), and in connection with that one of the ten lepers who returned to praise the Saviour for the cure he had received (Luke 17:19). You will find the expression, “Thy faith hath made thee whole” once in Matthew and twice in Mark, but you find it twice in Luke, and together therewith the twice repeated words of our text, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” Are we wrong in supposing that the long intercourse of Luke with the apostle Paul led him not only to receive the great doctrine of justification by faith which Paul so plainly taught, and to attach to faith that high importance which Paul always did, but also to have a peculiar memory for those expressions which were used by the Saviour, in which faith was manifestly honoured to a very high degree. Albeit Luke would not have written anything which was not true for the sake of maintaining the grand doctrine so clearly taught by the apostle, yet I think his full conviction of it would help to recall to his memory more vividly those words of the Lord Jesus from which it could be more clearly learned or illustrated. Be that as it may, we know that Luke was inspired, and that he has written neither more nor less than what the Saviour actually said, and hence we may be quite sure that the expression, “Thy faith hath saved thee,” fell from the Redeemer's lips, and we are bound to accept it as pure unquestionable truth, and we may repeat it ourselves without fear of misleading others, or trenching upon any other truth. I mention this because the other day I heard an earnest friend say that faith did not save us, at which announcement I was rather surprised. The brother, it is true, qualified the expression, and showed that he meant to make it clear that Jesus saved us, and not our own act of faith. I agreed with what he meant, but not with what he said, for he had no right to use an expression which was in flat contradiction to the distinct declaration of the Saviour, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” We are not to strain any expression to make it mean more than the speaker intended, and it is well to guard words from being misunderstood; but on the other hand, we may not quite go so far as absolutely to negative a declaration of the Lord himself, however we may mean to qualify it. It is to be qualified if you like, but it is not to be contradicted, for there it stands, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” Now we shall this morning, by God's help, inquire *what was it that saved* the two persons whose history will come before us? It was their faith. Our second inquiry will be *what kind of faith was it* which saved them? and then thirdly, *what does this teach us in reference to faith?*

I. WHAT WAS IT THAT SAVED the two persons whose history we are about to consider?

In the penitent woman's case, her great sins were forgiven her and she became a woman of extraordinary love: she loved much, for she had much forgiven. I feel, in thinking of her, something

like an eminent father of the church who said, "This narrative is not one which I can well preach upon; I had far rather weep over it in secret." That woman's tears, that woman's unbraided tresses wiping the Saviour's feet, her coming so near to her Lord in such company, facing such proud cavillers, with such fond and resolute intent of doing honour to Jesus; verily, among those that have loved the Saviour, there hath not lived a greater than this woman who was a sinner. Yet for all that Jesus did not say to her, "Thy love hath saved thee." Love is a golden apple of the tree of which faith is the root, and the Saviour took care not to ascribe to the fruit that which belongs only to the root. This loving woman was also right notable for her repentance. Mark ye well those tears. Those were no tears of sentimental emotion, but a rain of holy heart-sorrow for sin. She had been a sinner and she knew it; she remembered well her multitude of iniquities, and she felt each sin deserved a tear, and there she stood weeping herself away, because she had offended her dear Lord. Yet it is not said, "Thy repentance hath saved thee." Her being saved caused her repentance, but repentance did not save her. Sorrow for sin is an early token of grace within the heart, yet it is nowhere said, "Thy sorrow for sin hath saved thee." She was a woman of great humility. She came behind the Lord and washed his feet, as though she felt herself only able to be a menial servant to perform works of drudgery, and to find a pleasure in so serving her Lord. Her reverence for him had reached a very high point; she regarded him as a king, and she did what has sometimes been done for monarchs by zealous subjects—she kissed the feet of her heart's Lord, who well deserved the homage. Her loyal reverence led her to kiss the feet of her Lord, the Sovereign of her soul, but I do not find that Jesus said, "Thy humility hath saved thee;" or that he said, "Thy reverence hath saved thee;" but he put the crown upon the head of her faith, and said expressly, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

In the case of the blind man to whom my second text refers—this man was notable for his earnestness; he cried, and cried aloud, "Son of David, have mercy on me." He was notable for his importunity, for they who would have silenced him rebuked him in vain; he cried so much the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me." But I do not discover that Christ attributed his salvation to his prayers, earnest and importunate though they were. It is not written, "Thy prayers have saved thee"; it is written, "Thy faith hath saved thee." He was a man of considerable and clear knowledge, and he had a distinct apprehension of the true character of Christ: he scorned to call him Jesus of Nazareth, as the crowd did, but he proclaimed him "Son of David," and in the presence of that throng he dared avow his full conviction that the humble man, dressed in a peasant's garb, who was threading his way through the throng, was none other than the royal heir of the royal line of Judah, and was indeed the fulfiller of the type of David, the expected Messiah, the King of the Jews, the Son of David. Yet I do not find that Jesus attributed his salvation to his knowledge, to his clear apprehension, or to his distinct avowal of his Messiahship; but he said to him, "Thy faith hath saved thee," laying the entire stress of his salvation upon his faith.

This being so in both cases, we are led to ask, what is the reason for it? What is the reason why in every case, in every man that is saved, faith is the great instrument of salvation? Is it not first because God has a right to choose what way of salvation he pleases, and he has chosen that men should be saved, not by their works, but by their faith in his dear Son? God has a right to give his mercy to whom he pleases; he has a right to give it when he pleases; he has a right to give it in what mode he pleases; and know ye this, O sons of men, that the decree of heaven is immutable, and standeth fast forever—"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." To this there shall be no exception; Jehovah has made the rule and it shall stand. If

thou wouldst have salvation, “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”; but if not, salvation is utterly impossible to thee. This is the appointed way; follow it, and it leads to heaven; refuse it, and thou must perish. This is God’s sovereign determination, “He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.” Jehovah’s will be done. If this be his method of grace, let us not kick against it. If he determines that faith shall save, so let it be; only, Good Master, create and increase our faith.

But while I attribute this to the sovereign choice of God, I do see, for Scripture plainly indicates it, a reason in the nature of things why faith should thus have been selected. The apostle tells us it is of faith that it might be of grace. If the condition of salvation had been either feeling or working, then, such is the depravity of our nature, that we should inevitably have attributed the merit of salvation to the working or the feeling. We should have claimed something whereof to glory. It matters not how low the condition may have been, man would have still considered that there was something required of him, that something came from him, and that, therefore, he might take some credit to himself. But no man, unless he be demented, ever claims credit for believing the truth. If he hears that which convinces him, he is convinced; and if he be persuaded, he is persuaded; but he feels that it could not well be otherwise. He attributes the effect to the truth and the influence used. He does not go about and boast because he believes what is so clear to him that he cannot doubt it. If he did so boast of spiritual faith, all thinking men would say at once, “Wherefore dost thou boast in the fact of having believed, and especially when this believing would never have been thine if it had not been for the force of the truth which convinced thee, and the working of the Spirit of God which constrained thee to believe?” Faith is chosen by Christ to wear the crown of salvation because—let me contradict myself—it refuses to wear the crown. It was Christ that saved the penitent woman, it was Christ that saved that blind beggar, but he takes the crown from off his own head, so dear is faith to him, and he puts the diadem upon the head of faith and says, “Thy faith hath saved thee,” because he is absolutely certain that faith will never take the glory to herself, but will again lay the crown at the pierced feet, and say, “Not unto myself be glory, for thou hast done it; thou art the Saviour, and thou alone.” In order, then, to illustrate and to protect the interests of sovereign grace, and to shut out all vain glorying, God has been pleased to make the way of salvation to be by faith, and by no other means.

Nor is this all. It is clear to every one who chooses to think that in order to the renewal of the heart, which is the chief part of salvation, it is well to begin with the faith; because faith once rightly exercised becomes the mainspring of the entire nature. The man believes that he is forgiven. What then? He feels gratitude to him who has pardoned him. Feeling gratitude, it is but natural that he should hate that which displeases his Saviour, and should love intensely that which is pleasing to him who saved him, so that faith operates upon the entire nature, and becomes the instrument in the hand of the regenerating Spirit by which all the faculties of the soul are put into the right condition. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he, but his thinkings come out of his believings; if he be put right in his believings, then his understanding will operate upon his affections, and all the other powers of his manhood, and old things will pass away, all things will become new through the wonderful effect of the faith, which is of the operation of God. Faith works by love, and through love it purifies the soul, and the man becomes a new creature. See ye then the wisdom of God? He may choose what way he will, but he chooses a way which at once guards his grace from our felonious boastings, and on the other hand produces in us a holiness which other wise never would have been there.

Faith in salvation, however, is not the meritorious cause; nor is it in any sense the salvation itself. Faith saves us just as the mouth saves from hunger. If we be hungry, bread is the real cure for hunger, but still it would be right to say that eating removes hunger, seeing that the bread itself could not benefit us, unless the mouth should eat it. Faith is the soul's mouth, whereby the hunger of the heart is removed. Christ also is the brazen serpent lifted up; all the healing virtue is in him; yet no healing virtue comes out of the brazen serpent to any who will not look; so that the looking is rightly considered to be the act which saves. True, in the deepest sense it is Christ uplifted who saves, to him be all the glory; but without looking to him ye cannot be saved, so that

“There is life in a look,”

as well as life in the Saviour to whom you look. Nothing is yours until you appropriate it. If you be enriched, the thing appropriated enriches you; yet it is not incorrect but strictly right to say it is the appropriation of the blessing which makes you rich. Faith is the hand of the soul. Stretched out, it lays hold of the salvation of Christ, and so by faith we are saved. “Thy faith hath saved thee.” I need not dwell longer on that point. It is self-evident from the text that faith is the great means of salvation.

II. WHAT KIND OF FAITH WAS IT that saved these people? I will mention, first, the essential *agreements*; and then, secondly, the *differentia*, or the points in which this faith differed in its external manifestations in the two cases.

In the instances of the penitent woman and the blind beggar, their faith was fixed alone in Jesus. You cannot discover anything floating in their faith in Jesus which adulterated it; it was unmixed faith in him. the woman pressed forward to *him*, her tears fell on *him*; her ointment was for *him*; her unloosed tresses were a towel for *his*; *feet* she cared for no one else, not even for the disciples whom she respected for his sake; her whole spirit and soul were absorbed in him. He could save her; he could blot out her sins. She believed him; she did it unto him. The same was the case with that blind man. He had no thought of any ceremonies to be performed by priests; he had no idea of any medicine which might be given him by physicians. His cry was, “Son of David, Son of David.” The only notice he took of others was to disregard them, and still to cry, “Son of David, Son of David.” “What wilt thou that *I* shall do unto thee?” was the Lord's question, and it answered to the desire of his soul, for he knew that if anything were done it must be done by the Son of David. It is essential that our faith must rest alone on Jesus. Mix anything with Christ, and you are undone. If your faith shall stand with one foot upon the rock of his merits, and the other foot upon the sand of your own duties, it will fall, and great will be the fall thereof. Build wholly on the rock, for if so much as a corner of the edifice shall rest on anything beside, it will ensure the ruin of the whole:—

<>“None but Jesus, none but Jesus

Can do helpless sinners good.”

All true faith is alike in this respect.

The faith of these two was alike in its confession of unworthiness. What meant her standing behind? What meant her tears, her everflowing tears, but that she felt unworthy to draw near to Jesus? And what meant the beggar's cry, “Have mercy on me?” Note the stress he lays upon it. “Have *mercy* on me.” He does not claim the cure by merit, nor ask it as a reward. To mercy he appealed. Now I care not whose faith it is, whether it be that of David in his bitter cries of the fifty-first Psalm, or whether it be that of Paul in his highest exaltation upon being without condemnation through Christ, there is always in connection with true faith a thorough and deep sense that it is mercy, mercy alone, which saves us from the wrath to come. Dear hearer, do not

deceive yourself. Faith and boasting are as opposite to one another as the two poles. If you come before Christ with your righteousness in your hand, you come without faith; but if you come with faith you must also come with confession of sin, for true faith always walks hand in hand with a deep sense of guiltiness before the Most High. This is so in every case.

Their faith was alike, moreover, in defying and conquering opposition. Little do we know the inward struggles of the penitent as she crossed the threshold of Simon's house. "He will repel thee," the stern, cold Pharisee will say, "Get thee gone, thou strumpet; how darest thou defile the doors of honest men." But whatever may happen she passes through the door, she comes to where the feet of the Saviour are stretched out towards the entrance as he is reclining at the table, and there she stands. Simon glanced at her: he thought the glance would wither her, but her love to Christ was too well rooted to be withered by him. No doubt he made many signs of his displeasure, and showed that he was horrified at such a creature being anywhere near him, but she took no notice of him. Her Lord was there, and she felt safe. Timid as a dove, she trembled not while he was near; but she returned no defiant glances for Simon's haughty looks; her eyes were occupied with weeping. She did not turn aside to demand an explanation of his unkind motions, for her lips were all engrossed with kissing those dear feet. Her Lord, her Lord, was all to her. She overcame through faith in him, and held her ground, and did not leave the house till he dismissed her with "Go in peace."

It was the same with the blind man. He said, "Son of David, have mercy on me." They cried, "Hush! Why these clamours, blind beggar? His eloquence is music; do not interrupt him. Never man spake as he is speaking. Every tone rings like the harps of the angels. Hush! How darest thou spoil his discourse?" But over and above them all went up the importunate prayer, "Son of David, have mercy upon me," and he prevailed. All true faith is opposed. If thy faith be never tried it is not born of the race of the church militant. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," but it is indicated in that very declaration that there must be something to overcome, and that faith must wage war for its existence.

Once more, the faith of these two persons was alike in being openly avowed. I will not say that the avowal took the same form in both, for it did not; but still it was equally open. There is the Saviour, and there comes the weeping penitent. She loves him. Is she ashamed to say so? It may bring her reproach; it will certainly rake up the old reproaches against her, for she has been a sinner. Never mind what she has been, nor who may be present to see her. She loves her Lord, and she will show it. She will bring the ointment and she will anoint his feet, even in the presence of Pharisees, Pharisees who would say, "Is this one of the disciples of Christ? A pretty convert to boast of! A fine conquest this, for his kingdom! A harlot becomes a disciple! What next and what next?" She must have known and felt all that, but still there was no concealment. She loved her Lord, and she would avow it, and so in the very house of the Pharisee, there being no other opportunity so convenient, she comes forward, and without words, but with actions far more eloquent than words, she says, "I love him. These tears shall show it; this ointment shall diffuse the knowledge of it, as its sweet perfume fills the room; and every lock of my hair shall be a witness that I am my Lord's and he is mine." She avowed her faith.

And so did the blind man. He did not sit there and say, "I know he is the Son of David, but I must not say it." They said, some of them contemptuously, and others indifferently, "It is Jesus of Nazareth." But he will not have it so. "Thou Son of David," saith he; and loud above their noise I hear him cry, like a herald proclaiming the King, "Son of David." Why, sirs, it seems to me he was exalted to a high office: he became the herald of the King, and proclaimed him, and this belongs

to a high officer of State in our country. The blind beggar showed great decision and courage. He cried in effect, "Son of David thou art; Son of David I proclaim thee; Son of David thou shalt be proclaimed, whoever may gainsay it; only turn thine eyes and have mercy upon me." Are there any of you here who have a faith in Christ which you are ashamed of? I also am ashamed of you, and so also will Christ be ashamed of you when he cometh in the glory of his Father and all his holy angels with him. Ashamed to claim that you are honest? Then methinks you must live in bad company, where to be a rogue is to be famous; and if you are ashamed to say, "I love my Lord," methinks you are courting the friendship of Christ's enemies, and what can you be but an enemy yourself: If you love him, say it. Put on your Master's regimentals, enlist in his army, and come forward and declare, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Their faith was alike then in these four particulars, it was fixed alone on him, it was accompanied with a sense of unworthiness, it struggled and conquered opposition, and it openly declared itself before all comers.

By your patience I shall now try to show the *differences* between the same faith as to its manifestations. First, the woman's faith acted like a woman's faith. She showed tender love, and the affections are the glory and the strength of women. They were certainly such in her. Her love was intense, womanly love, and she poured it out upon the Saviour. The man's faith acted like a man's in its determination and strength. He persisted in crying, "Thou Son of David." There was as much that was masculine about his faith as there was of the feminine in the penitent's faith, and everything should be in its order and after its season. It would not have been meet for the woman's voice to be heard so boldly above the crowd; it would have seemed out of place for a man's tears to have been falling upon the Saviour's feet. Either one or the other might have been justifiable, but they would not have been equally suitable. But now they are as suitable as they are excellent. The woman acts as a godly woman should. The man like a godly man. Never let us measure ourselves by other people. Do not, my brother, say, "I could not shed tears." Who asked thee to do so? A man's tears are mostly within, and so let them be: it is ours to use other modes of showing our love. And, my sister, do not say, "I could not act as a herald and publicly proclaim the King." I doubt not thou couldst do so if there were need, but thy tears in secret, and those wordless tokens of love to Jesus which thou are rendering, are not less acceptable because they are not the same as a man would give. Nay, they are the better because they are more suitable to thee. Do not think that all the flowers of God's garden must bloom in the same colour or shed the same perfume.

Notice next that the woman acted like a woman who had been a sinner. What more meet than tears? What more fitting place for her than at the Saviour's feet? She had been a sinner, she acts like a sinner; but the man who had been a beggar acted like a beggar. What does a beggar do but clamour for alms? Did he not beg gloriously? Never one plied the trade more earnestly than he. "Son of David," said he, "have mercy on me." I should not have liked to have seen the beggar sitting there weeping; nor to have heard the penitent woman shouting. Neither would have been natural or seemly. Faith works according to the condition, circumstances, sex, or ability of the person in whom it lives, and it best shows itself in its own form, not in an artificial manner, but in the natural outflow of the heart.

Observe, also, that the woman did not speak. There is something very beautiful in the golden silence of the woman, which was richer than her silver speech would have been. But the man was not silent; he spoke; he spoke out, and his words were excellent. I venture to say that the woman's silence spoke as powerfully as the man's voice. Of the two I think I find more eloquence in the tears bedewing, and unbraided hair wiping the Saviour's feet, than in the cry, "Son of David, have

mercy on me." Yet both forms of expression were equally good, the silence best in the woman with her tears, and the speech best in the man with his confident trust in Christ. Do not think it necessary, dear friend, in order to serve, to do other people's work. What thine own hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. If you think you can never honour Christ till you enter a pulpit, it may be just possible that you will afterwards honour him best by getting out of it as quickly as you can. There have been persons well qualified to adorn the religion of Christ with a lapstone on their lap who have thought it necessary to mount a pulpit, and in that position have been a hindrance to Christ and his gospel. Sister, there is a sphere for you; keep to it, let none push you out of it; but do not think there is nothing else to do except the work which some other woman does. God has called her, let her follow God's voice; he calls you in another direction, follow his voice thither. You will be most like that other excellent woman when you are most different from her: I mean, you will be most truly obedient to Christ, as she is, if you pursue quite another path.

There was a difference, again, in this. The woman gave—she brought her ointment. The man did the opposite—he begged. There are various ways of showing love to Christ, which are equally excellent tokens of faith. To give him of her ointment, and give him of her tears, and give him the accommodation of her hair, was well; it showed her faith, which worked by love: to give nothing, for the beggar had nothing to give, but simply to honour Christ by appealing to his bounty and his royal power, was best in the beggar. I can commend neither above the other, for I doubt not that both the penitent and the beggar gave Christ their whole heart, and what more does Jesus ask for from any one?

The thoughts of the woman and the thoughts of the beggar were different too. Her thoughts were mainly about the past, and her sins—hence her tears. To be forgiven, that was her point. His thoughts were mainly about the present, and did not so much concern his sin as his deficiency, infirmity, and inability, and so he came with different thoughts. I do not doubt that he thought of sin, as I dare say she also thought of infirmity; but in her case the thought of sin was uppermost, and hence the tears; in his the infirmity was uppermost, and hence the prayer, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Do not, then, compare your experience with that of another. God is a God of wonderful variety. The painter who repeats himself in many pictures has a paucity of conception, but the master artist scarcely ever sketches the same thing a second time. There is a boundless variety in genius, and God who transcends all the genius of men, creates an infinite variety in the works of his grace. Look not, therefore, for likeness everywhere. The woman, it is said, loved much, and she proved her love by her acts; but the man loved much too, and showed his love by actions which were most admirable, for he followed Jesus in the way, glorifying God. Yet they were different actions. I do not find that he brought any box of ointment, or anointed Christ's feet, neither do I find that she literally followed Christ in the way, though no doubt she followed him in the spirit; neither did she with a loud voice glorify God as the restored blind beggar did. There are differences of operation, but the same Lord; there are differences of capacity and differences of calling, and by this reflection I hope you will be enabled to deliver yourselves from the fault of judging one by another, and that you will look for the same faith, but not for the same development of it.

So interesting is this subject that I want you to follow me while I very rapidly sketch the woman's case, and then the man's, not mentioning the differences one by one, but allowing the two pictures to impress themselves separately upon your minds.

Observe this woman. What a strange compound she was. She was consciously unworthy, and therefore she wept, yet she drew very near to Jesus. Her acts were those of nearness and communion; she washed his feet with her tears, she wiped them with the hairs of her head, and meanwhile she kissed them again and again. "She hath not ceased," said Christ, "to kiss my feet." A sense of unworthiness, and the enjoyment of communion, were mixed together. Oh, divine faith which blends the two! She was shamefaced, yet was she very bold. She dared not look the Master in the face as yet; she approached him from behind; yet she dared face Simon, and remain in his room, whether he frowned or no. I have known some who have blushed in the face of Christ who would not have blushed before a judge, nor at the stake, if they had been dragged there for Christ's sake. Such a woman was Anne Askew, humble before her Master, but like a lioness before the foes of God.

The penitent woman wept, she was a mourner, yet she had a deep joy; I know she had, for every kiss meant joy. Every time she lifted that blessed foot, and kissed it, her heart leaped with the transport of love. Her heart knew bitterness for sin, but it knew also the sweetness of pardon. What a mixture! Faith made the compound. She was humble, never one more so; yet see how she takes upon herself to deal with the King himself. Brethren, you and I are satisfied, and well we may be, if we may wash the saints' feet, but she was not. Oh, the courage of this woman! She will pass through the outer court, and get right to the King's own throne, and there pay her homage, in her own person, to his person, and wash the feet of the wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God. I know not that an angel ever performed such suit and service, and therefore this woman takes preeminence as having done for Jesus what no other being ever did. I have said that she was silent, and yet she spake; I will add, she was despised, but Christ set her high in honour, and made Simon, who despised her, to feel little in her presence. I will also add she was a great sinner, but she was a great saint. Her great sinnership, when pardoned, became the raw stuff out of which great saints are made by the mighty power of God. Finally she was saved by faith, so says the text, but if ever there was a case in which James could not have said, "Shall faith save thee?" and in which he must have said, "Here is one that shows her faith by her works," it was the case of this woman. There she is before you. Imitate her faith itself, though you cannot actually copy her deeds.

Now look at the man. He was blind, but he could see a great deal more than the Pharisees, who said they could see. Blind, but his inward optics saw the king in his beauty, saw the splendour of his throne, and he confessed it. He was a beggar, but he had a royal soul, and a strong sovereign determination which was not to be put down. He had the kind of mind which dwells in men who are princes among their fellows. He is not to be stopped by disciples, nay, nor by apostles. He has begun to pray, and pray he will till he obtains the boon he seeks. Note well that what he knew he avowed, what he desired he pleaded for, and what he needed he understood. "Lord, that I might receive my sight;" he was clear about his needs, and clear about the only person who could supply them. What he asked for he expected, for when he was bidden to come he evidently expected that his sight would be restored, for we are told by another Evangelist that he cast away his beggar's cloak. He felt he should never want to beg again. He was sure his eyes were about to be opened. Lastly, what he received he was grateful for, for as soon as he could walk without a guide he took Christ to be his guide, and followed him in the way, glorifying him. Look on both pictures. May you have the shadows and the lights of both, as far as they would tend to make you also another and distinct picture by the selfsame artist, whose hand alone can produce such wonders.

III. WHAT DOES THIS TEACH US IN REFERENCE TO FAITH? It teaches us first that faith is all important. Do, I pray you, my hearers, see whether you have the precious faith, the faith of God's elect. Remember there are not many things in Scripture called precious, but there is the precious blood, and there goes with it the precious faith. If you have not that you are lost; if you have not that you are neither fit to live nor fit to die; if you have not that, your eternal destiny will be infinite despair; but if you have faith, though it be as a grain of mustard seed, you are saved. "Thy faith hath saved thee."

Learn next that the main matter in faith is the person whom you believe. I do not say *in* whom you believe. That would be true, but not quite so scriptural an expression. Paul does not say, as I hear most people quote it, "I know *in* whom I have believed." Faith believes Christ. Your faith must recognise him as a person, and come to him as a person, and rest not in his teaching merely, or his work only, but in him. "Come unto *me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest." A personal Saviour for sinners! Are you resting on him alone? Do you believe him? You know the safety of the building depends mainly upon the foundation, and if the foundation be not right, you may build as you will, it will not last. Do you build, then, on Christ alone? Inquire about that as a special point.

Observe next, that we must not expect exactly the same manifestation in each convert. Let not the elders of the church expect it, let not parents require it from their children; let not anxious friends look for it; do not expect it in yourself. Biographies are very useful, but they may become a snare. I must not judge that I am not a child of God because I am not precisely like that good man whose life I have just been reading. Am I resting in Christ? Do I believe him? Then it may be the Lord's grace is striking out quite a different path for me from that which has been trodden by my brother, that it may illustrate other phases of its power, and show to principalities and powers the exceeding riches of divine love.

And, lastly, the matter which sums up all is this, if we have faith in Jesus we are saved, and ought not to talk or act as if there were any question about it. "THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE." Jesus says it. Granted, you have faith in Christ, and it is certain that faith hath saved you. Do not, therefore, go on talking and acting and feeling as if you were not saved. I know a company of saved people who say every Sabbath, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners"; but they are not miserable sinners if they are saved, and for them to use such words is to throw a slight upon the salvation which Christ has given them. If they are saved sinners they ought to be rejoicing saints. What some say others do not say, but they act as if it were so. They go about asking God to give them the mercy they have already obtained, hoping one day to receive what Christ assures them is already in their possession, talking to others as if it were a matter of question whether they were saved or not, when it cannot be a matter of question. "Thy faith hath saved thee." Fancy the poor penitent woman turning round and saying to the Saviour, "Lord, I humbly hope that it is true." There would have been neither humility nor faith in such an expression. Imagine that blind man, when Christ said, "Thy faith hath saved thee," saying "I trust that in future years it will be found to be so." It would be a belying at once of his own earnest character and of Christ's honesty of speech. If thou hast believed, thou art saved. Do not talk as if thou wert not, but now down from the willows take thy harp, and sing unto the Lord a new song. I have noticed in many prayers a tendency to avoid speaking as if facts were facts. I have heard this kind of expression, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof *we desire* to be glad." The text is, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad;" and if the Lord has done these great things for us our right is

to be glad about them, not to go with an infamous “if” upon our lips before the Lord who cannot lie. If ye are dealing with your fellow creatures, suspect them, for they mostly deserve it; if ye are listening to their promises, doubt them, for their promises go to be broken; but if ye are dealing with your Lord and Master, never suspect him, for he is beyond suspicion; never doubt his promises, for heaven and earth and hell shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his word shall fail. I claim for Christ that ye cast away forever all the talk which is made up of “buts,” and “ifs,” and “peradventures,” and “I hope,” and “I trust.” You are in the presence of One who said, “Verily, verily,” and meant what he said, who is “the Amen, the faithful and true witness.”

You would not spit in his face if he were here, yet your “ifs” and “buts” are so much insult cast upon his truth. You would not scourge him, but what do your doubts do but vex him and put him to shame? If he lies, never believe him; if he speaks the truth, never doubt him. Then shall ye know when ye have cast aside your wicked unbelief, that your faith has saved you, and ye will go in peace.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 7:36-50; 18:35-43.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—18 (Ver. 1.), 536, 586.

An Earnest Warning about Lukewarmness

A Sermon

(No. 1185)

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, July 26th, 1874, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and [that] the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”—Rev. 3:14-21

No Scripture ever wears out. The epistle to the church of Laodicea is not an old letter which may be put into the waste basket and be forgotten; upon its page still glow the words, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” This Scripture was not meant to instruct the Laodiceans only, it has a wider aim. The actual church of Laodicea has passed away, but other Laodiceas still exist—indeed, they are sadly multiplied in our day, and it has ever been the tendency of human nature, however inflamed with the love of God, gradually to chill into lukewarmness. The letter to the Laodiceans is above all others the epistle for the present times.

I should judge that the church at Laodicea was once in a very fervent and healthy condition. Paul wrote a letter to it which did not claim inspiration, and therefore its loss does not render the Scriptures incomplete, for Paul may have written scores of other letters besides. Paul also mentions the church at Laodicea in his letter to the church at Colosse; he was, therefore, well acquainted with it, and as he does not utter a word of censure with regard to it, we may infer that the church was at that time in a sound state. In process of time it degenerated, and cooling down from its former ardour it became careless, lax, and indifferent. Perhaps its best men were dead, perhaps its wealth seduced it into worldliness, possibly its freedom from persecution engendered carnal ease, or neglect of prayer made it gradually backslide; but in any case it declined till it was neither cold nor hot. Lest we should ever get into such a state, and lest we should be in that state now, I pray that my discourse may come with power to the hearts of all present, but especially to the consciences of the members of my own church. May God grant that it may tend to the arousing of us all.

I. My first point will be **THE STATE INTO WHICH CHURCHES ARE VERY APT TO FALL.** *A church may fall into a condition far other than that for which it has a repute.* It may be famous for zeal and yet be lethargic. The address of our Lord begins, “I know thy works,” as much as to say, “Nobody else knows you. Men think better of you than you deserve. You do not know

yourselves, you think your works to be excellent; but I know them to be very different.” Jesus views with searching eyes all the works of his church. The public can only read reports, but Jesus sees for himself. He knows what is done, and how it is done, and why it is done. He judges a church not merely by her external activities, but by her internal pieties; he searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men. He is not deceived by glitter; he tests all things, and values only that gold which will endure the fire. Our opinion of ourselves and Christ’s opinion of us may be very different, and it is a very sad thing when it is so. It will be melancholy indeed if we stand out as a church notable for earnestness and distinguished for success, and yet are not really fervent in spirit, or eager in soul-winning. A lack of vital energy where there seems to be most strength put forth, a lack of real love to Jesus where apparently there is the greatest devotedness to him, are sad signs of fearful degeneracy. Churches are very apt to put the best goods into the window, very apt to make a fair show in the flesh, and like men of the world, they try to make a fine figure upon a very slender estate. Great reputations have often but slender foundations, and lovers of the truth lament that it should be so. Not only is it true of churches, but of every one of us as individuals, that often our reputation is in advance of our deserts. Men often live on their former credit, and trade upon their past characters, having still a name to live, though they are indeed dead. To be slandered is a dire affliction, but it is, upon the whole, a less evil than to be thought better than we are; in the one case we have a promise to comfort us, in the second we are in danger of self-conceit. I speak as unto wise men, judge ye how far this may apply to us.

The *condition described in our text is, secondly, one of mournful indifference and carelessness.* They were not cold, but they were not hot; they were not infidels, yet they were not earnest believers; they did not oppose the gospel, neither did they defend it; they were not working mischief, neither were they doing any great good; they were not disreputable in moral character, but they were not distinguished for holiness; they were not irreligious, but they were not enthusiastic in piety nor eminent for zeal: they were what the world calls “Moderates,” they were of the Broad-church school, they were neither bigots nor Puritans, they were prudent and avoided fanaticism, respectable and averse to excitement. Good things were maintained among them, but they did not make too much of them; they had prayer-meetings, but there were few present, for they liked quiet evenings at home: when more attended the meetings they were still very dull, for they did their praying very deliberately and were afraid of being too excited. They were content to have all things done decently and in order, but vigour and zeal they considered to be vulgar. Such churches have schools, Bible-classes, preaching rooms, and all sorts of agencies; but they might as well be without them, for no energy is displayed and no good comes of them. They have deacons and elders who are excellent pillars of the church, if the chief quality of pillars be to stand still, and exhibit no motion or emotion. They have ministers who may be the angels of the churches, but if so, they have their wings closely clipped, for they do not fly very far in preaching the everlasting gospel, and they certainly are not flames of fire: they may be shining lights of eloquence, but they certainly are not burning lights of grace, setting men’s hearts on fire. In such communities everything is done in a half-hearted, listless, dead-and-alive way, as if it did not matter much whether it was done or not. It makes one’s flesh creep to see how sluggishly they move: I long for a knife to cut their red tape to pieces, and for a whip to lay about their shoulders to make them bestir themselves. Things are respectably done, the rich families are not offended, the sceptical party is conciliated, and the good people are not quite alienated: things are made pleasant all round. The right things are done, but as to doing them with all your might, and soul, and strength, a Laodicean church has no notion of

what that means. They are not so cold as to abandon their work, or to give up their meetings for prayer, or to reject the gospel; if they did so, then they could be convinced of their error and brought to repentance; but on the other hand they are neither hot for the truth, nor hot for conversions, nor hot for holiness, they are not fiery enough to burn the stubble of sin, nor zealous enough to make Satan angry, nor fervent enough to make a living sacrifice of themselves upon the altar of their God. They are “neither cold nor hot.”

This is a horrible state, because it is one which in a church wearing a good reputation renders that reputation a lie. When other churches are saying, “See how they prosper! see what they do for God!” Jesus sees that the church is doing his work in a slovenly, make-believe manner, and he considers justly that it is deceiving its friends. If the world recognizes such a people as being very distinctly an old-fashioned puritanic church, and yet there is unholy living among them, and careless walking, and a deficiency of real piety, prayer, liberality, and zeal, then the world itself is being deceived, and that too in the worst way, because it is led to judge falsely concerning Christianity, for it lays all these faults upon the back of religion, and cries out, “It is all a farce! The thing is a mere pretence! Christians are all hypocrites!” I fear there are churches of this sort. God grant we may not be numbered with them!

In this state of the church there is much self-glorification, for Laodicea said, “I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” The members say, “Everything goes on well, what more do we want? All is right with us.” This makes such a condition very hopeless, because reproofs and rebukes fall without power, where the party rebuked can reply, “We do not deserve your censures, such warnings are not meant for us.” If you stand up in the pulpit and talk to sleepy churches, as I pretty frequently do, and speak very plainly, they often have the honesty to say, “There is a good deal of truth in what the man has said”: but if I speak to another church, which really is half asleep, but which thinks itself to be quite a model of diligence, then the rebuke glides off like oil down a slab of marble, and no result comes of it. Men are less likely to repent when they are in the middle passage between hot and cold, than if they were in the worst extremes of sin. If they were like Saul of Tarsus, enemies of God, they might be converted; but if, like Gamaliel, they are neither opposed nor favouring, they will probably remain as they are till they die. The gospel converts a sincerely superstitious Luther, but Erasmus, with his pliant spirit, flippant, and full of levity, remains unmoved. There is more hope of warning the cold than the lukewarm.

When churches get into the condition of half-hearted faith, tolerating the gospel, but having a sweet tooth for error, they do far more mischief to their age than downright heretics.

It is harder a great deal to work for Jesus with a church which is lukewarm than it would be to begin without a church. Give me a dozen earnest spirits and put me down anywhere in London, and by God's good help we will soon cause the wilderness and the solitary place to rejoice; but give me the whole lot of you, half-hearted, undecided, and unconcerned, what can I do? You will only be a drag upon a man's zeal and earnestness. Five thousand members of a church all lukewarm will be five thousand impediments, but a dozen earnest, passionate spirits, determined that Christ shall be glorified and souls won, must be more than conquerors; in their very weakness and fewness will reside capacities for being the more largely blessed of God. Better nothing than lukewarmness.

Alas, this state of lukewarmness is so congenial with human nature that it is hard to fetch men from it. Cold makes us shiver, and great heat causes us pain, but a tepid bath is comfort itself. Such a temperature suits human nature. The world is always at peace with a lukewarm church, and such a church is always pleased with itself. Not too worldly,—no! We have our limits! There are certain

amusements which of course a Christian must give up, but we will go quite up to the line, for why are we to be miserable? We are not to be so greedy as to be called miserly, but we will give as little as we can to the cause. We will not be altogether absent from the house of God, but we will go as seldom as we can. We will not altogether forsake the poor people to whom we belong, but we will also go to the world's church, so as to get admission into better society, and find fashionable friends for our children. How much of this there is abroad! Compromise is the order of the day. Thousands try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, they are for God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, truth and error, and so are "neither hot nor cold." Do I speak somewhat strongly? Not so strongly as my Master, for he says, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." He is nauseated with such conduct, it sickens him, and he will not endure it. In an earnest, honest, fervent heart nausea is created when we fall in with men who dare not give up their profession, and yet will not live up to it; who cannot altogether forsake the work of God, but yet do it in a sluggard's manner, trifling with that which ought to be done in the best style for so good a Lord and so gracious a Saviour. Many a church has fallen into a condition of indifference, and when it does so it generally becomes the haunt of worldly professors, a refuge for people who want an easy religion, which enables them to enjoy the pleasures of sin and the honours of piety at the same time; where things are free and easy, where you are not expected to do much, or give much, or pray much, or to be very religious; where the minister is not so precise as the old school divines, a more liberal people, of broad views, free-thinking and free-acting, where there is full tolerance for sin, and no demand for vital godliness. Such churches applaud cleverness in a preacher; as for his doctrine, that is of small consequence, and his love to Christ and zeal for souls are very secondary. He is a clever fellow, and can speak well, and that suffices. This style of things is all too common, yet we are expected to hold our tongue, for the people are very respectable. The Lord grant that we may be kept clear of such respectability!

We have already said that *this condition of indifference is attended with perfect self-complacency*. The people who ought to be mourning are rejoicing, and where they should hang out signals of distress they are flaunting the banners of triumph. "We are rich, we are adding to our numbers, enlarging our schools, and growing on all sides; we have need of nothing. What can a church require that we have not in abundance?" Yet their spiritual needs are terrible. This is a sad state for a church to be in. Spiritually poor and proud. A church crying out to God because it feels itself in a backsliding state; a church mourning its deficiency, a church pining and panting to do more for Christ, a church burning with zeal for God, and therefore quite discontented with what it has been able to do; this is the church which God will bless: but that which writes itself down as a model for others, is very probably grossly mistaken and is in a sad plight. This church, which was so rich in its own esteem, was utterly bankrupt in the sight of the Lord. It had no real joy in the Lord; it had mistaken its joy in itself for that. It had no real beauty of holiness upon it; it had mistaken its formal worship and fine building and harmonious singing for that. It had no deep understanding of the truth and no wealth of vital godliness, it had mistaken carnal wisdom and outward profession for those precious things. It was poor in secret prayer, which is the strength of any church; it was destitute of communion with Christ, which is the very life blood of religion; but it had the outward semblance of these blessings, and walked in a vain show. There are churches which are poor as Lazarus as to true religion, and yet are clothed in scarlet and fare sumptuously every day upon the mere form of godliness. Spiritual leanness exists side by side with vain-glory. Contentment as to worldly goods makes men rich, but contentment with our spiritual condition is the index of poverty.

Once more, this church of Laodicea had fallen into *a condition which had chased away its Lord*. The text tells us that Jesus said, "I stand at the door and knock." That is not the position which our Lord occupies in reference to a truly flourishing church. If we are walking aright with him, he is in the midst of the church, dwelling there, and revealing himself to his people. His presence makes our worship to be full of spirituality and life; he meets his servants at the table, and there spreads them a feast upon his body and his blood; it is he who puts power and energy into all our church-action, and causes the word to sound out from our midst. True saints abide in Jesus and he in them. Oh, brethren, when the Lord is in a church, it is a happy church, a holy church, a mighty church, and a triumphant church; but we may grieve him till he will say, "I will go and return to my place, until they acknowledge their offence and seek my face." Oh, you that know my Lord, and have power with him, entreat him not to go away from us. He can see much about us as a people which grieves his Holy Spirit, much about any one of us to provoke him to anger. Hold him, I pray you, and do not let him go, or if he be gone, bring him again to his mother's house, into the chamber of her that bare him, where, with holy violence, we will detain him and say, "Abide with us, for thou art life and joy, and all in all to us as a church. Ichabod is written across our house if thou be gone, for thy presence is our glory and thy absence will be our shame." Churches may become like the temple when the glory of the Lord had left the holy place, because the image of jealousy was set up and the house was defiled. What a solemn warning is that which is contained in Jeremiah 7:12-15, "But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore I will do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim."

II. Now let us consider, secondly, THE DANGER OF SUCH A STATE. The great danger is, first, *to be rejected of Christ*. He puts it, "I will spue thee out of my mouth,"—as disgusting him, and causing him nausea. Then the church must first be in his mouth, or else it could not be spued from it. What does this mean? Churches are in Christ's mouth in several ways, they are used by him as his testimony to the world; he speaks to the world through their lives and ministries. He does as good as say, "O sinners, if ye would see what my religion can do, see here a godly people banded together in my fear and love, walking in peace and holiness." He speaks powerfully by them, and makes the world see and know that there is a true power in the gospel of the grace of God. But when the church becomes neither cold nor hot he does not speak by her, she is no witness for him. When God is with a church the minister's words come out of Christ's mouth. "Out of his mouth went a two-edged sword," says John in the Revelation, and that "two-edged sword" is the gospel which we preach. When God is with a people they speak with divine power to the world, but if we grow lukewarm Christ says, "Their teachers shall not profit, for I have not sent them, neither am I with them. Their word shall be as water spilt on the ground, or as the whistling of the wind." This is a dreadful thing. Better far for me to die than to be spued out of Christ's mouth.

Then he also ceases to plead for such a church. Christ's special intercession is not for all men, for he says of his people, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." I do not think Christ ever prays for the church of Rome—what would he pray for, but her total overthrow? Other churches are nearing the same fate; they are not clear in his truth or

honest in obedience to his word: they follow their own devices, they are lukewarm. But there are churches for which he is pleading, for he has said, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Mighty are his pleadings for those he really loves, and countless are the blessings which comes in consequence. It will be an evil day when he casts a church out of that interceding mouth, and leaves her unrepresented before the throne because he is none of his. Do you not tremble at such a prospect? Will you not ask for grace to return to your first love? I know that the Lord Jesus will never leave off praying for his own elect, but for churches as corporate bodies he may cease to pray, because they become anti-Christian, or are mere human gatherings, but not elect assemblies, such as the church of God ought to be. Now this is the danger of any church if it declines from its first ardour and becomes lukewarm. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

What is the other danger? This first comprehends all, but another evil is hinted at,—such a church will be *left to its fallen condition*, to become wretched,—that is to say, miserable, unhappy, divided, without the presence of God, and so without delight in the ways of God, lifeless, spiritless, dreary, desolate, full of schisms, devoid of grace, and I know not what beside, that may come under the term "wretched." Then the next word is "miserable," which might better be rendered "pitiable." Churches which once were a glory shall become a shame. Whereas men said, "The Lord has done great things for them," they shall now say, "see how low they have fallen! What a change has come over the place! What emptiness and wretchedness! What a blessing rested there for so many years, but what a contrast now!" Pity will take the place of congratulation, and scorn will follow upon admiration. Then it will be "poor" in membership, poor in effort, poor in prayer, poor in gifts and graces, poor in everything. Perhaps some rich people will be left to keep up the semblance of prosperity, but all will be empty, vain, void, Christless, lifeless. Philosophy will fill the pulpit with chaff, the church will be a mass of worldliness, the congregation an assembly of vanity. Next, they will become blind, they will not see themselves as they are, they will have no eye upon the neighborhood to do it good, no eye to the coming of Christ, no eye for his glory. They will say, "We see," and yet be blind as bats. Ultimately they will become "naked," their shame will be seen by all, they will be a proverb in everybody's mouth. "Call that a church!" says one. "Is that a church of Jesus Christ?" cries a second. Those dogs that dared not open their mouths against Israel when the Lord was there will begin to howl when he is gone, and everywhere will the sound be heard, "How are the mighty fallen, how are the weapons of war broken."

In such a case as that the church will *fail of overcoming*, for it is "to him that overcometh" that a seat upon Christ's throne is promised; but that church will come short of victory. It shall be written concerning it even as of the children of Ephraim, that being armed and carrying bows they turned their backs in the day of battle. "Ye did run well," says Paul to the Galatians, "what did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Such a church had a grand opportunity, but it was not equal to the occasion, its members were born for a great work, but inasmuch as they were unfaithful, God put them aside and used other means. He raised up in their midst a flaming testimony for the gospel, and the light thereof was cast athwart the ocean, and gladdened the nations, but the people were not worthy of it, or true to it, and therefore he took the candlestick out of its place, and left them in darkness. May God prevent such an evil from coming upon *us*: but such is the danger to all churches if they degenerate into listless indifference.

III. Thirdly, I have to speak of THE REMEDIES WHICH THE LORD EMPLOYS. I do earnestly pray that what I say may come home to all here, especially to every one of the members of this church, for it has come very much home to me, and caused great searching of heart in my own soul, and yet I do not think I am the least zealous among you. I beseech you to judge yourselves, that you be not judged. Do not ask me if I mean anything personal. I am personal in the most emphatic sense. I speak of *you* and to *you* in the plainest way. Some of you show plain symptoms of being lukewarm, and God forbid that I should flatter you, or be unfaithful to you. I am aiming at personality, and I earnestly want each beloved brother and sister here to take home each affectionate rebuke. And you who come from other churches, whether in America or elsewhere, you want arousing quite as much as we do, your churches are not better than ours, some of them are not so good, and I speak to you also, for you need to be stirred up to nobler things.

Note, then, the first remedy. Jesus gives a *clear discovery* as to the church's true state. He says to it—"Thou art lukewarm, thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." I rejoice to see people willing to know the truth, but most men do not wish to know it, and this is an ill sign. When a man tells you that he has not looked at his ledger, or day-book, or held a stock-taking for this twelvemonths, you know whereabouts he is, and you say to your manager, "Have you an account with him? Then keep it as close as you can." When a man dares not know the worst about his case, it is certainly a bad one, but he that is right before God is thankful to be told what he is and where he is. Now, some of you know the faults of other people, and in watching this church you have observed weak points in many places,—have you wept over them? Have you prayed over them? If not, you have not watched as you should do for the good of your brethren and sisters, and, perhaps, have allowed evils to grow which ought to have been rooted up: you have been silent when you should have kindly and earnestly spoken to the offenders, or made your own example a warning to them. Do not judge your brother, but judge yourself: if you have any severity, use it on your own conduct and heart. We must pray the Lord to use this remedy, and make us know just where we are. We shall never get right as long as we are confident that we are so already. Self-complacency is the death of repentance.

Our Lord's next remedy is *gracious counsel*. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire." Does not that strike you as being very like the passage in Isaiah, "Come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price?" It is so, and it teaches us that one remedy for lukewarmness is to begin again just as we began at first. We were at a high temperature at our first conversion. What joy, what peace, what delight, what comfort, what enthusiasm we had when first we knew the Lord! We bought gold of him then for nothing, let us go and buy again at the same price.

If religion has not been genuine with us till now, or if we have been adding to it great lumps of shining stuff which we thought was gold and was not, let us now go to the heavenly mint and buy gold tried in the fire, that we may be really rich. Come, let us begin again, each one of us. Inasmuch as we may have thought we were clothed and yet we were naked, let us hasten to him again, and at his own price, which is no price, procure the robe which he has wrought of his own righteousness, and that goodly raiment of his Spirit, which will clothe us with the beauty of the Lord. If, moreover, we have come to be rather dim in the eye, and no longer look up to God and see his face, and have no bright vision of the glory to be revealed, and cannot look on sinners with weeping eyes, as we once did, let us go to Jesus for the eye-salve, just as we went when we were stone blind at first, and the Lord will open our eyes again, and we shall behold him in clear vision as in days gone by. The

word from Jesus is, "Come near to me, I pray you, my brethren. If you have wandered from me, return; if you have been cold to me I am not cold to you, my heart is the same to you as ever, come back to me, my brethren. Confess your evil deeds, receive my forgiveness, and henceforth let your hearts burn towards me, for I love you still and will supply all your needs." That is good counsel, let us take it.

Now comes a third remedy, sharp and cutting, but sent in love, namely, *rebukes and chastenings*. Christ will have his favoured church walk with great care, and if she will not follow him fully by being shown wherein she has erred, and will not repent when kindly counselled, he then betakes himself to some sharper means. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." The word here used for "love" is a very choice one; it is one which signifies an intense personal affection. Now, there are some churches which Christ loves very specially, favouring them above others, doing more for them than for others, and giving them more prosperity; they are the darlings of his heart, his Benjamins. Now, it is a very solemn thing to be dearly loved by God. It is a privilege to be coveted, but mark you, the man who is so honoured occupies a position of great delicacy. The Lord thy God is a jealous God, and he is most jealous where he shows most love. The Lord lets some men escape scot free for awhile after doing many evil things, but if they had been his own elect he would have visited them with stripes long before. He is very jealous of those whom he has chosen to lean upon his bosom and to be his familiar friends. Your servant may do many things which could not be thought of by your child or your wife; and so is it with many who profess to be servants of God—they live a very lax life, and they do not seem to be chastened for it, but if they were the Lord's own peculiarly beloved ones he would not endure such conduct from them. Now mark this, if the Lord exalts a church, and gives it a special blessing, he expects more of it, more care of his honour, and more zeal for his glory than he does of any other church; and when he does not find it, what will happen? Why, because of his very love he will rebuke it with hard sermons, sharp words, and sore smittings of conscience. If these do not arouse it he will take down the rod and deal out chastenings. Do you know how the Lord chastens churches? Paul says, "For this cause some are sickly among you, and many sleep." Bodily sickness is often sent in discipline upon churches, and losses, and crosses, and troubles are sent among the members, and sometimes leanness in the pulpit, breakings out of heresy and divisions in the pew, and lack of success in all church work. All these are smittings with the rod. It is very sad, but sometimes that rod does not fall on that part of the church which does the wrong. Sometimes God may take the best in the church, and chasten them for the wrong of others. You say, "How can that be right?" Why, because they are the kind of people who will be most benefited by it. If a vine wants the knife, it is not the branch that bears very little fruit which is trimmed, but the branch which bears much fruit is purged because it is worth purging. In their case the chastening is a blessing and a token of love. Sorrow is often brought upon Christians by the sins of their fellow-members, and many an aching heart there is in this world that I know of, of brethren and sisters who love the Lord and want to see souls converted, but they can only sigh and cry because nothing is done. Perhaps they have a minister who does not believe the gospel, and they have fellow-members who do not care whether the minister believes it or not, they are all asleep together except those few zealous souls who besiege the throne of grace day and night, and they are the ones who bear the burden of the lukewarm church. Oh, if the chastening comes here, whoever bears it, may the whole body be the better for it, and may we never rest till the church begins to glow with the sacred fire of God, and boil with enthusiastic desire for his glory.

The last remedy, however, is the best of all to my mind. I love it best and desire to make it my food when it is not my medicine. The best remedy for backsliding churches is *more communion with Christ*. "Behold," saith he, "I stand at the door and knock." I have known this text preached upon to sinners numbers of times as though Christ knocked at their door and they had to open it, and so on. The preacher has never managed to keep to free grace for this reason, that the text was not meant to be so used, and if men will ride a text the wrong way, it will not go. This text belongs to the church of God, not to the unconverted. It is addressed to the Laodicean church. There is Christ outside the church, driven there by her unkindness, but he has not gone far away, he loves his church too much to leave her altogether, he longs to come back, and therefore he waits at the doorpost. He knows that the church will never be restored till he comes back, and he desires to bless her, and so he stands waiting, knocking and knocking, again and again; he does not merely knock once, but he *stands* knocking by earnest sermons, by providences, by impressions upon the conscience, by the quickenings of his Holy Spirit; and while he knocks he speaks, he uses all means to awaken his church. Most condescendingly and graciously does he do this, for having threatened to spue her out of his mouth, he might have said, "I will get me gone; and I will never come back again to thee," that would have been natural and just; but how gracious he is when, having expressed his disgust he says, "Disgusted as I am with your condition, I do not wish to leave you; I have taken my presence from you, but I love you, and therefore I knock at your door, and wish to be received into your heart. I will not force myself upon you, I want you voluntarily to open the door to me." Christ's presence in a church is always a very tender thing. He never is there against the will of the church, it cannot be, for he lives in his people's wills and hearts, and "worketh in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure." He does not break bolt and bar and come in as he often does into a sinner's heart, carrying the soul by storm, because the man is dead in sin, and Christ must do it all, or the sinner will perish; but he is here speaking to living men and women, who ought also to be loving men and women, and he says, "I wish to be among you, open the door to me." We ought to open the door at once, and say, "Come in, good Lord, we grieve to think we should ever have put thee outside that door at all."

And then see what promises he gives. He says he will come and sup with us. Now, in the East, the supper was the best meal of the day, it was the same as our dinner; so that we may say that Christ will come and dine with us. He will give us a rich feast, for he himself is the daintiest and most plenteous of all feasts for perishing souls. He will come and sup with us, that is, we shall be the host and entertain him: but then he adds, "and he with me," that is, he will be the host and guest by turns. We will give him of our best, but poor fare is that, too poor for him, and yet he will partake of it. Then he shall be host, and we will be guest, and oh, how we will feast on what he gives! Christ comes, and brings the supper with him, and all we do is to find the room. The Master says to us, "Where is the guest chamber?" and then he makes ready and spreads his royal table. Now, if these be the terms on which we are to have a feast together, we will most willingly fling open the doors of our hearts and say, "Come in, good Lord." He says to you, "Children, have you any meat?" and if you are obliged to say, "No, Lord," he will come in unto you none the less readily, for there are the fish, the net is ready to break, it is so full, and here are more upon the coals ready. I warrant you, if we sup with him, we shall be lukewarm no longer. The men who live where Jesus is soon feel their hearts burning. It is said of a piece of scented clay by the old Persian moralist that the clay was taken up and questioned. "How camest thou to smell so sweetly, being nothing but common clay?" and it replied, "I laid for many a year in the sweet society of a rose, until at last I drank in

its perfume”; and we may say to every warm-hearted Christian, “How camest thou so warm?” and his answer will be, “My heart bubbleth up with a good matter, for I speak of the things which I have made touching the King. I have been with Jesus, and I have learned of him.”

Now, brethren and sisters, what can I say to move you to take this last medicine? I can only say, take it, not only because of the good it will do you, but because of the sweetness of it. I have heard say of some persons that they were pledged not to take wine except as a medicine, but then they were very pleased when they were ill: and so if this be the medicine, “I will come and sup with him, and he with me,” we may willingly confess our need of so delicious a remedy. Need I press it on you? May I not rather urge each brother as soon as he gets home today to see whether he cannot enter into fellowship with Jesus? and may the Spirit of God help him!

This is my closing word, there is something for us to do in this matter. We must examine ourselves, and we must confess the fault if we have declined in grace. An then we must not talk about setting the church right, we must pray for grace each one for himself, for the text does not say, “If the church will open the door,” but “If *any man* hear my voice and open the door.” It must be done by individuals: the church will only get right by each man getting right. Oh, that we might get back into an earnest zeal for our Lord’s love and service, and we shall only do so by listening to his rebukes, and then falling into his arms, clasping him once again, and saying, “My Lord and my God.” That healed Thomas, did it not? Putting his fingers into the print of the nails, putting his hand into the side, that cured him. Poor, unbelieving, staggering Thomas only had to do that and he became one of the strongest of believers, and said, “My Lord and my God.” You will love your Lord till your soul is as coals of juniper if you will daily commune with him. Come close to him, and once getting close to him, never go away from him any more. The Lord bless you, dear brethren, the Lord bless you in this thing.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation 3.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—184, 787, 992.

The Blood of the Covenant

A Sermon

(No. 1186)

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, August 2nd, 1874, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”—Hebrews 13:20-21.

WHAT WE ASK OTHERS to do we should be prepared to do ourselves. Precept fails unless it be followed up by example. The apostle had exhorted the Hebrew believers to pray for him in the words, “Pray for us;” and then, as if to show that he did not ask of them what he was not himself. Willing to give, he utters this most wonderful prayer for them. He may confidently say to his congregation, “Pray for me” who does unfeignedly from his soul pray for them. The prayer of the apostle, as you observe, is tinged with the subject upon which he had been writing. This Epistle to the Hebrews is full of distinctions between the old covenant and the new, the gist of it being to show that the former covenant was only typical of that abiding dispensation which followed it; for it had only the shadow, and not the very image of heavenly things. His subject had been the covenant, and when he prayed his garments were sweet with the myrrh and aloes and cassia among which his meditations had conducted him. According to the manner of his thoughts was the expression of his desires. He weaved into the texture of his prayer the meditations of his heart. And this is a very right method, especially when the prayer is public, for it ensures variety, it assists others to unite with us, and it tends to edification; in fact, as the bee gathers honey from many flowers, and the honey is often flavored with wild thyme or some other special flower which abounds in the region from which it collects its sweets, so doth our soul gather dainty stores of the honey of devotion from all sources, but that upon which she longest tarries in her meditations yields a paramount savor and flavor to the expression and the spirit of her prayer. What was more natural than that a discourse upon the covenant should be followed by this covenant prayer: “The God of peace, that brought from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will”?

The subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews is deep, for it passes on from the superficial rudiments to those underlying truths which are more mysterious and profound. It is a book for the higher classes in Christ's school; and hence this prayer is not for babes, but for men of understanding. We could not say to all the saints, “after this manner pray ye,” for they would not know what they were asking; they have need to begin with something simpler, such as that sweet “Our Father, which art in heaven,” which suits alike all believers. Full grown men feed on strong meat, think sublime thoughts, and offer mighty prayers. As we may admire in the prayer of the babe its simplicity, and in the prayer of the young man its vivacity, so in the prayer of one who has become a father in Christ, and feeds upon the covenant, we rejoice in its depth, compass, and sublimity. All these we find here. I invite those who would understand the deep things of God to ask the Holy Spirit's

assistance while we follow the apostle in this his covenant prayer, a prayer of which the covenant is the thread, the substance, and the plea.

I. The subject of our discourse this morning, therefore, is the covenant of grace, as it is here spoken of; and I shall begin by noticing, first, THE COVENANT NAMES which the apostle uses. He calls the ever-blessed Father "*the God of peace;*" and to the Redeemer who has taken the other side of the covenant, he gives the title, "*Our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep.*" Dear friends, as many of us as have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are in Christ, and he is our Head and Representative, our Shepherd and Sponsor. On our behalf he made a covenant with the Father upon this tenor, that we having sinned, a full recompense should be made to injured justice, and the law of God should be fully honored; the Father on his part stipulating to grant full pardon, acceptance, adoption, and eternal life to us. Now, the covenant has been kept on Christ's side. The text assures us of that, for Jesus has according to his promise shed his blood, and now the covenant stands only to be fulfilled on the side of the eternal Father, and under that aspect of the covenant the apostle calls the Father "the God of peace." What a precious name! Under the covenant of works he is the God of vengeance; to sinners he is the thrice Holy God, terrible out of his holy places. Even our God is a consuming fire; and yet to us, seeing that the covenant has been fulfilled on our side by our great Head and Representative, he is only "the God of peace." All is peace between you and God, Christian; there is no past ground of quarrel remaining, nor any fear that a new one can arise; the everlasting covenant secures everlasting peace. He is not the God of a hollow truce, not the God of a patched-up forgetfulness of unforgiven injuries, but the God of peace in the very deepest sense; he is himself at peace, for there is a peace of God that passeth all understanding; and, moreover, by reason of his mercy his people are made to enjoy peace of conscience within themselves, for you feel that God is reconciled to you, your hearts rest in him, your sins which separated you have been removed, and perfect love has cast out the fear which hath torment. While the Lord is at peace with himself, and you are made to enjoy inward peace through him, he is also at peace with you, for he loves you with a love unsearchable; he sees nothing in you but that which he delights in, for in the covenant he does not look at you as you are in yourself, but in your Head, Christ Jesus, and to the eye of God there is no sight in the universe so lovely as his own dear Son, and his people in his Son. There is beauty enough in Jesus to make him forget our deformities, merits enough in Jesus to swallow up our demerits, and efficacy sufficient in the atoning blood of our great High Priest to wash away all our transgressions. As for us, our soul recognizing that blood, and perceiving the love of God towards us, feels now no war with God. We did rebel once, for we hated him, and even now, when the old nature champs the bit, and the Lord's will runs cross to our desires, we do not find it easy to bow before him and say, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because it seemed good in thy sight": but yet the new nature which comes to the front does rule and govern, and all heart-contest between our soul and God is at an end. To us the Lord is in the widest and most perfect sense the God of peace. Oh, how I love that name; himself the peaceful, happy God, unruffled, undisturbed; ourselves within ourselves made to enjoy a peace that passeth all understanding, which keeps our hearts and minds. God at peace with us, declaring that he will never be wroth with us nor rebuke us, and ourselves rejoicing in him, delighting in his law, and living for his glory. Henceforth be it ours in every troubled hour to look to the Lord under this cheering name, "the God of peace," for as such the covenant reveals him.

The apostle had a view of the other great party to the covenant, and he names him "Our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep." We must view our Redeemer in the covenant first as *Jesus*

the Savior who leads us into the Canaan which has been given to us by a covenant of salt, even the rest which remaineth to the people of God; he is also *the Lord* Jesus, in all the dignity of his nature, exalted far above all principalities and powers, to be obeyed and worshipped by us; and *our Lord* Jesus—ours because he has given himself to us, and we have accepted and received him with holy delight to be the Lord whom we cheerfully serve. Our Lord *Jesus* because he saves us; our *Lord* Jesus because by bringing us under his kingdom he rescues us; and *our Lord* Jesus because we have a special relation both to his sovereignty and his salvation. We are not generally observant of the appropriateness of our Lord's names, we do not notice the instruction which is intended by the writers who use them, nor do we exercise discretion enough ourselves in the employment of them; yet is there great force in these titles when appropriately employed. Other names may have small significance, but in the titles of Jesus there is a wealth of meaning.

Further, our Lord is called "that great Shepherd of the sheep." In the covenant we are the sheep, the Lord Jesus is the Shepherd. You cannot make a covenant with sheep, they have not the ability to covenant; but you can make a covenant with the Shepherd for them, and so, glory be to God, though we had gone astray like lost sheep, we belonged to Jesus, and he made a covenant on our behalf, and stood for us before the living God. Now, I have aforetime explained to you that our Lord Jesus in his death is the *good* Shepherd—the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep, and so shows his goodness; that in his rising again he is the *great* Shepherd, as we have it in the text, for his resurrection and return to glory display his greatness; but in his second advent he is the *chief* Shepherd—"when the chief Shepherd shall appear ye also shall appear with him in glory"—there he shows his superior sovereignty. Our Lord was *good* in laying down his life for the sheep, and there are other shepherds whom he makes good, who in his name feed his lambs and sheep. When he comes again the second time he will appear with others, the *chief* among them all; but in his resurrection for our justification, in connection with the covenant, he is alone, and bears the name of *the* or "*that* great Shepherd,"—that great Shepherd of whom all prophecy has spoken, in whom all the divine decrees are fulfilled, before whom all others shrink away, who stands alone, as in that covenant capacity the sole and only Shepherd of the sheep.

It is very beautiful to trace the shepherds through the Old Testament, and to see Christ as Abel, the witnessing shepherd, pouring out that blood, which crieth from the ground; as Abraham, the separating shepherd, leading out his flock into the strange country where they dwelt alone; as Isaac, the quiet shepherd, digging wells for his flock, and feeding them in peace in the midst of the enemies; as Jacob, the shepherd who is surety for the sheep, who earns them all by long toils and weariness, separates them, and walks in the midst of them to Canaan, preserving them by his own lone midnight prayers. There, too, we see our Lord as Joseph, the shepherd who is head over Egypt for the sake of Israel, of whom his dying father said, "From thence is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel." Head over all things for his church, the King who governs all the world for the sake of his elect, the great Shepherd of the sheep, who for their sakes has all power committed unto his hands. Then follows Moses, the chosen shepherd, who led his people through the wilderness up to the Promised Land, feeding them with manna and giving them drink from the smitten rock,—what a wide theme for resection here! And then there is David, the type of Jesus, as reigning in the covenanted inheritance over his own people, as a glorious king in the midst of them all. All these together enable us to see the varied glories of "that great Shepherd of the sheep."

Beloved, this is a great subject, and I can only hint at it. Let us rejoice that our Shepherd is *great*, because he with his great flock will be able to preserve them all from the great dangers into

which they are brought, and to perform for them the great transactions with the great God which are demanded of a Shepherd of such a flock as that which Jesus calls his own. Under the covenant, Jesus is Prophet, Priest, and King—a shepherd should be all this to his flock; and he is great in each of these offices. While we rest in the covenant of grace we should view our Lord as our Shepherd, and find solace in the fact that sheep have nothing to do with their own feeding, guidance, or protection; they have only to follow their Shepherd unto the pastures which he prepares, and all will be well with them. “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters.”

II. Secondly, the apostle mentions THE COVENANT SEAL. “The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd, of the sheep, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*” The seal of the covenant is the blood of Jesus. In olden times when men made covenants the one with the other, they generally used some ceremony to bind the bargain, as it were. Now, under the old dispensation covenants with God were always confirmed with blood. As soon as ever blood was shed, and the victim died, the agreement made was established. Now, when our heavenly Father made a covenant with Jesus Christ on our behalf, that covenant was true and firm, “according to the sure mercies of David,” but to make it stand fast there must be blood. Now, the blood ordained to seal the covenant was not the blood of bulls or of goats, but the blood of the Son of God himself; and this has made the covenant so binding that sooner may heaven and earth pass away than one Little of it fail. God must keep his own promises. He is a free God, but he binds himself; by two immutable things wherein it is impossible for him to lie, he has bound himself to bestow covenant blessings upon the flock which the great Shepherd represented. Brethren, you and I, as honest men, are bound by our word. If we took an oath, which I trust we would not, we should certainly feel doubly bound by it; and if we had lived in the old times, and blood had been sprinkled on an agreement which we had made, we should regard the solemn sign and never dream of running back from it. Think, for a moment, how impossible it is that the Lord should ever break that covenant of grace, which he spontaneously made with his own Son, and with us in him, now that it has been sprinkled with blood from the veins of his own well-beloved Son No; the covenant is everlasting. It stands fast for ever, because it is confirmed by blood which is none other than the blood of the Son of God.

Remember, too, that in our case that blood not only confirmed the covenant, but actually fulfilled it; because the covenant stipulation was on this wise:—Christ must subtler for our sins and honor the divine law. He had kept the law in his life, but it was necessary to the complete fulfilling of the covenant on his part that he should also be obedient to death, even the death of the cross. The shedding of his blood therefore was the carrying out of his promised obedience to its extremity. It was the actual fulfillment of Christ’s side of the covenant on our behalf; so that now the whole covenant must stand firm, for that upon which it depended is finished for ever. It is not only ratified with that bloody signature, but by that blood it is actually carried out on Christ’s part, and it cannot be that the eternal Father should start back from his side of the compact since our side of it has been carried out to the letter by that great Shepherd of the sheep who laid down his life for us.

By the shedding of the blood the covenant is turned into a testament. In some Bibles, the margin puts it “testament,” and often in other cases we scarcely know how to translate the word, whether to say the new testament or the new covenant; certainly it is now a testament, for since Christ has kept his part of the covenant he wills to us what is due to him from God, and he makes over to us by his death all that comes to him as his reward, making us his heirs by a testament which is rendered

valid by his death. So you may say “testament” if you please, or “covenant” if you will, only forget not that the blood has made both testament and covenant sure to all the sheep of whom Jesus is the shepherd.

Dwell with pleasure upon that word “*everlasting covenant*.” Certain men in these days declare that “everlasting” does not mean everlasting, but indicates a period to which an end will come sooner or later; I have no sympathy with them, and feel no inclination to renounce the everlastingness of heaven and other divine blessings in order to gratify the tastes of wicked men by denying the eternity of future punishments. Human nature leans in that direction, but the word of God does not, and following its unerring track we rejoice in the *everlasting* covenant, which will abide for ever and ever. The covenant of works is gone; it was based on human strength, and it dissolved as a dream; in the nature of things it could not be everlasting. Man could not keep the condition of it, and it fell to the ground. But the covenant of grace depended only upon the power and love and faithfulness of Christ, who has kept his part of the covenant, and therefore the covenant now rests only upon God, the faithful and true, whose word cannot fail.

“As well might he his being quit,
As break his promise, or forget.”

“His mercy endureth for ever, and his truth throughout all generations.” He has said, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good,” and therefore do them good he must, for he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. So, then, the covenant seal makes all things sure.

III. We have now to notice THE COVENANT FULFILMENT, for the Lord has commenced to fulfill it. “The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” See, then, Jesus Christ has been brought back again from the dead through the blood of the covenant. Here is the story. He was the covenantor on our behalf; he took our sin upon himself, and undertook to suffer for it. Having been crucified he yielded up his life, and from the cross he was taken to the grave, and there he lay in durance vile. Now, it was a part of the covenant on God the Father’s part that he would not leave Christ’s soul in Hades, nor suffer his Holy One to see corruption; this agreement has been faithfully kept. Christ on the cross represented all of us who believe in him—we were crucified in him: Jesus in the tomb also represented us, for we are buried with him. Whatever happened to him happened also to the flock. Now, then, what will occur to the body of Jesus? Will God keep his covenant? Will the worm devour that lovely frame, or will it defy corruption? Will it come to pass that he who has descended into the earth shall never return? Wait. It is the third morning! The promised time has come. As yet no worm has dared to feed upon that God-like form, yet it lies among the dead; but on the third morning the slumberer awakes like one that has been refreshed with sleep. He rises. The stone is rolled away. Angels escort him to liberty. He comes into the open air of the garden, and speaks to his disciples. Jesus who bled has left the dead, no more to die. He waits for forty days that he may let his friends see that he is really risen, but he has to rise higher yet to be fully brought back to his former honors. Will God be faithful to him and bring him back from the dead all the way he once descended? Yes, for on the Mount of Olives, when the time is come, he begins to ascend; cleaving the ambient air he mounts from amidst his worshipping disciples, till a cloud receives him. But will he rise fully to the point from which he came? Will he in his own person gain for his church a full recovery from all the ruin of the fall? Ah, see him as he enters the gates of pearl! How he is welcomed by the Father! See how he climbs aloft, and sits upon the

Father's throne, for God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.

Now note by what means our Lord returned from the dead to all this glory. It was because he had presented the blood of the everlasting covenant. When the Father saw that Jesus had kept all his part of the covenant even to death, then he began to fulfill his portion of the contract by bringing back his Son from the grave to life, from shame to honor, from humiliation to glory, from death to immortality. See where he now sits expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. Now, what has been done to Jesus has been virtually done to all his people, because, you observe, the Lord "brought again from the dead," not the Lord Jesus as a private person only, but "Our Lord Jesus," as "that great Shepherd of the sheep." The sheep are with the Shepherd. Shepherd of the sheep, where is thy flock? We know that thou hast loved them even to the end; but thou art gone; hast thou left them in the wilderness? It cannot be, for it is written, "Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Hear the Shepherd say, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." "Because I live ye shall live also." "Where I am there also shall my servant be." Beloved, the sheep never are away from that great Shepherd of the sheep, they are always in his hand, and none can pluck them thence. They were on earth with him, and they are risen with him. If Jesus had remained in the grave there must all his sheep have perished; but when the Father brought him back by the blood, he brought us back by the blood, and gave us for our souls a lively hope that they shall never die, and for our bodies the expectation of resurrection.

"For though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust,
Yet as the Lord our Shepherd rose,
So all his followers must."

Jesus in heaven is only there as our representative, and his flock is following him. I wish you could get a picture in your eye of the hills of heaven rising up from these lowlands. We are feeding here awhile under his watchful eye, and yonder is a river which runs at the foot of the celestial hills, and parts us from heavenly pasturage. One by one our beloved ones are being called across the flood by the Good Shepherd's voice, and they cross the river pleasantly at his bidding, so that a long line of his sheep may be seen going over the stream and up the hillside to where the Shepherd stands and receives them. This line joins the upper flock to the lower, and makes them all one company. Do you not see them continually streaming up to him, and passing again under the hand of him that telleth them, to be fed by the Lamb and made to lie down for ever where wolves can never come? Thus the one flock is even now with the Shepherd, for it is all one pasture to him, though to us it seems divided by Jordan's torrent. Every one of the sheep is marked with the blood of the everlasting covenant; every one of them has been preserved, because Jesus lived; and as he was brought again from the dead by the blood, even so must they be, for so the covenant stands.

Remember, then, dear friends, that the punishment of the flock was borne by the Shepherd, that the flock died in the Shepherd, and that the flock now live because the Shepherd lives; that their life is consequently a new life; that he will bring all his sheep that as yet are not called, out of their death in sin, even as he has been brought out of his own death; that he will lead onward and upward those that are called, even as he went onward and upward from the grave to the throne; that he will preserve them all their journey through, even as he was preserved by the blood of the everlasting covenant; and that he will perfect them even as he is perfect. Even as the God of peace has glorified his Son, so also will he bring all his chosen to eternal glory with him.

IV. Fourthly, we will view THE COVENANT BLESSING. What is one of the greatest of all the covenant blessings? The writer of this epistle here pleads for it. "Now," saith he, "the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, *make you perfect in every good worry to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight.*" Notice that one of the chief blessings of the covenant is power and will to serve God. The old covenant said, "There are the tables of stone, mind that you obey every word that is written thereon: if you do you shall live, and if you do not you shall die." Man never did obey, and consequently no one ever entered heaven or found peace by the law. The new covenant speaketh on this wise, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. I will write my law in their hearts, and on their minds will I write them. I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me." The prophets enlarge most instructively upon this new covenant. It is not a covenant of "if you will I will," but it runs thus, "I will and you shall." As a covenant this exactly suits me. If there were something to be performed by me I could never be sure, but as it is finished I am at rest. God sets us working, and we work; but the covenant itself dependeth wholly upon that great promise, "I will not turn away from them to do them good." So that it was right of Paul to pray that God would make us meet in every good work to do his will, because of old this was the master promise, that those for whom Jesus died should be sanctified, purified, and made meet to serve their God. Great as the prayer is, it is asking what the covenant itself guarantees.

Taking the text word by word, I perceive that the first blessing asked for by the apostle is *meetness for the divine service*, for the Greek word is not "Make you *perfect*," but *meet*, "fit," "prepared," "able for." I have no reference to the discussion upon the doctrine of perfection in this observation. No one text would decide that controversy; I simply make the observation because it is matter of fact. The expression should be rendered, "Make you fully complete," or "fully fitted" to do his will. We ought to request earnestly that we may be qualified, adapted, and suited, to be used of God for the performance of his will. After the man once dead in sin is made alive again, the question arises, who shall be his master? We having died in our great Shepherd, and having been brought again from the dead, to whom shall we yield ourselves? Certainly unto God alone. Our prayer is that we may be made meet to do his will. Our Shepherd did his Father's will, for he cried, "I delight to do thy will, O God," "by the which will we are sanctified," and sanctified to the doing of that will each one of us thenceforth. It is a grand desire, but it burns in every Christian heart, that now he may be meet to serve his God, may be a vessel such as God can use, an instrument fit for the divine hand; weak and feeble, but not impure, unsuitable by reason of want of native strength, but suitable through having been cleansed by the blood of the covenant. Dear brothers and sisters, ask for meetness for service; pray day and night that you may be fully fitted for every good work.

But the apostle asked for *an inward work of grace*, not merely meetness for service, but an operation felt—"Working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight." I long above everything to possess in myself the inworking of the Holy Ghost more and more clearly. There is so much superficial religion, and we are so apt to be contented with it that it becomes us to pray for deep heart-work. We need to have our affections elevated, our will subdued, our understanding enlightened, and our whole nature deeply spiritualized by the presence of the Holy Ghost. Now this is the promise of the covenant: "I will dwell in them and walk in them." Remember, God worked in Christ in the grave by quickening his body into life, and he must work in us according

to the working of that mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. Ask the Lord to do it. Do not be satisfied with a little, weak, almost imperceptible, pulse of religion, of which you can hardly judge whether it is there or not; but ask to feel the divine energies working within you, the eternal omnipotence of God, struggling and striving mightily in your spirit until sin shall be conquered, and grace shall gloriously triumph. This is a covenant blessing. Seek ye for it.

But we need *outward* as well as inward work. Working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight—no small matter when you remember that nothing but perfect holiness can please God. Paul would have us made fit for every good work, wanted us to be many-sided men who could do every good work, just as Jesus did. He wished us to be qualified for any station and every position. When Jesus Christ rose from the dead he was seen; there was not merely a secret quickening in him, but a visible life, he was seen of angels and of men, and here below he lived for a period of time the observed of all observers. So, dear brethren, there ought to be in us not only an inner resurrection which we feel, but such a quickening that we shall be manifestly alive to newness of life. We must know the power of our Lord's resurrection, and exhibit it in every action of our lives. May God grant us this. There is much upon this point which time does not permit me to enlarge upon. May you know it all by experience.

Observe, once more, the *completeness* of this covenant blessing. Just as Jesus is fully restored to the place from which he came, and has lost no dignity nor power by having shed his blood, but rather is exalted higher than ever, so God's design is to make us pure and holy as Adam was at the first, and to add to our characters a force of love which never would have been there if we had not sinned and been forgiven, an energy of intense devotion, an enthusiasm of perfect self-sacrifice, which we never could have learned if it had not been for him who loved us and gave himself for us. God means to make us the princes of the blood royal of the universe, or, if you will, the body guards of the Lord of Hosts. He desires to fashion an order of creatures who will come very near to him, and yet will feel the loveliest reverence for him. He will have them akin to himself, partakers of the divine natures and yet the most obedient of servants, perfectly free agents, and yet bound to him by bonds which will never let them disobey in thought, or word, or deed. And this is how he is fashioning this central battalion who shall wait upon his eternal marchings for ever—he is forgiving us great sins, he is bestowing upon us great blessings, he is making us one with his dear Son; and when he has entirely freed us from the cerements of our spiritual death he will call us up to where Jesus is, and we shall serve him with an adoration superior to all the rest of his creatures. Angels cannot love so much as we shall, for they have never tasted redeeming grace and dying love. This high devotion is the Lord's aim. He did not bring up the Lord Jesus from the dead that he might live a common life. He lifted him up that he might be head over all things to his church, and that all things might be under his feet; even so the destiny of Christians is mysteriously sublime: they are not lifted up from their native death to a mere morality. They are destined to be something more than philanthropists and men esteemed by their fellows, they are to exhibit to angels, and principalities, and powers, the wonderful grace of God, showing in their own persons what God can do with his creatures through the death of his Son. I do but touch like a swallow with my wing where it were delightful to dive.

IV. We conclude with THE COVENANT DOXOLOGY, "*To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*" If anything in the world can make a man praise his God it is the covenant, and the knowledge that he is in it. I will leave off preaching and ask you to think over the love of God in the covenant.

It does not belong to all of you. Christ is not the Shepherd of the whole herd of men; he is only the Shepherd of the sheep, and he has not entered into any covenant for all mankind, but for his sheep alone. The covenant is for his own people; if you believe in him it is a covenant for you, but if you reject him you can have no participation in that covenant; for you are under the covenant of works, which condemns you. But now, believer, just sit down for a moment and think over this exceeding mercy. Your God, the everlasting Father, has entered into a solemn compact with Christ on your behalf; that he will save you, keep you, and make you perfect. He has saved you; he has performed a large part of the covenant in you already, for he has placed you in the way of life and kept you to this day; and if, indeed, you are his, he will keep you to the end. The Lord is not as the foolish man who bedpan to build and was not able to finish. He does not commence to carry out a design, and then turn from it. He will push on his work till he completes it in you. Can you really believe it? With you, a poor puny mortal, who will soon sleep in the grave—with you he has made an everlasting covenant! Will you not say with our text, “To whom be glory.” Like dying David you can say, “Though my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure.” I am sure you will joyfully add, “Glory be to his name.”

Our God deserves *exclusive* glory. Covenant theology glorifies God alone. There are other theologies abroad which magnify men; they give him a finger in his own salvation, and so leave him a reason for throwing up his cap and saying, “Well done I;” but covenant theology puts man aside, and makes him a debtor and a receiver. It does, as it were, plunge him into the sea of infinite grace and unmerited favor, and it makes him give up all boasting, stopping the mouth that could have boasted by filling it with floods of love, so that it cannot utter a vainglorious word. A man saved by the covenant must give all the glory to God’s holy name, for to God all the glory belongs. In salvation wrought by the covenant the Lord has exclusive glory.

He also has *endless* glory. “To whom be glory for ever and ever.” Have you glorified God a little, dear brethren, because of his covenant mercy? Go on glorifying him. Did you serve him well when you were young? Ah, not so well as you wish you had: then serve him better now in these riper days. Throw yourself into the glorifying of God. The task of saving yourself is not yours, Jesus has done it all. You may sing,

“A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;”
But you will not need to add—
“A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky,”

For that soul of yours is saved; “he hath saved us and called us with a holy calling,” and you are fitted for the sky by the blood of the ever lasting covenant, for Paul says, “Thanks be unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” All you have to do is to glorify the Lord who has saved you and set your feet upon a rock, and established your goings. Now, go at it with all your might. Are you getting grey, dear brother? With all your experience yore ought now to glorify the Lord more than ever. You will soon be up yonder in the land of the living. Do not praise the Redeemer any longer at a poor dying rate, for you have but a short time to tarry here. And, oh, when we ascend above these clouds, how we will magnify our covenant God! I am sure I shall not feel my powers capacious enough, even in heaven, to express my gratitude for his amazing love. I do not wonder that the poet says—

“Eternity’s too short

To utter half his praise.”

People find fault with that expression, and say it is an exaggeration. How would you have the poets talk? Is not hyperbole allowable to them? I might even plead that it is not an hyperbole, for neither time nor eternity can utter all the praises of the infinite Jehovah.

“On, for a thousand tongues to sing

Our great Redeemer’s praise.”

This shall be the sweetest note of all our music,—*the covenant*, “the covenant made with David’s Lord, in all things ordered well,” the covenant with that great Shepherd of the sheep by which every sheep was preserved and kept, and brought into the rich pastures of eternal glory. We will sing of covenant love in heaven. This shall be our last song on earth and the first in Paradise—“The covenant, the covenant sealed with blood.” How I wish Christ’s ministers would spread more and more of this covenant doctrine throughout England. He who understands the two covenants has found the marrow of all theology, but he who does not know the covenants knows next to nothing of the gospel of Christ. You would think, to hear some ministers preach, that salvation was all of works, that it was still uncertain who would be saved, that it was all a matter of “ifs,” and “buts,” and “peradventures” and if you begin to give them “shells,” and “wills,” and purposes, and decrees, and pledges, and oaths, and blood, they call you Calvinistic. Why, this doctrine was true before Calvin was born or thought of! Calvin loved it as we do, but it did not come from him. Paul had taught it long before; nay, the Holy Ghost taught it to us in the word, and therefore we hold it. The bringing back of this truth to the front will be a grand thing for the church. From the mouth of this cannon the Lord will blow the Pope and all his myrmidons into a thousand shivers, but no other doctrine will do it. By God’s good grace, we must live this doctrine as well as preach it, and may he that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will. Then will he have glory through the covenant and through you, both now and for ever. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews 13.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—412, 1054, 317.

The Three Witnesses

A Sermon

(No. 1187)

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, August 9th, 1874, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.”—1 John 5:8.

CHRISTIANITY PUTS FORTH very lofty claims. She claims to be the true faith, and the only true one. She avows her teachings to be divine, and therefore infallible; while for her great Teacher, the Son of God, she demands divine worship, and the unreserved confidence and obedience of men. Her commands are issued to every creature, and though at present her authority is rejected by millions of mankind, she confidently looks forward to a time when truth shall obtain universal dominion, and Jesus the Lord shall take unto himself his great power and reign.

Now, to justify such high claims, the gospel ought to produce strong evidence, and it does so. It does not lack for external evidences, these are abundant, and since many learned men have spent their lives in elaborating them, there is less need for me to attempt a summary of them. In these days scarce a stone is turned over among yonder eastern reins which does not proclaim the truth of the word of God, and the further men look into either history or nature, the more manifest is the truth of scriptural statements. The armoury of external evidences is well stored with weapons of proof. The gospel also bears within itself its own evidence, it has a self-proving power. It is so pure, so holy, so altogether above the inventive capacity of fallen man, that it must be of God. But neither with these external or internal evidences have we to do this morning, but I call your attention to the three witnesses which are spoken of in the text, three great witnesses still among us, whose evidence proves the truth of our religion, the dinning, of our Lord, and the future supremacy of the faith. Our text speaks of three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood: may the Holy Ghost who is our Interpreter, lead us into the full meaning of this very, remarkable passage.

I. I shall note, first, that **OUR LORD HIMSELF WAS ATTESTED BY THESE THREE WITNESSES**. If you will carefully read in the twenty-ninth chapter of the Book of Exodus, or in the eighth chapter of the Book of Leviticus, you will see that when a priest was ordained (and a priest was a type of Christ) three things were always used: he was washed with water in every case, a sacrifice was brought, and his ear, his thumb, and his toe were touched with blood, and then he was anointed with oil, in token of that unction of the Spirit with which the coming High Priest of our profession would be anointed. So that every priest came by the anointing Spirit, by water, and by blood, as a matter of type, and if Jesus Christ be indeed the priest that was for to come, he will be known by these three signs.

Godly men in the olden times also well understood that there was no putting away of sin except with these three things; in proof of which we will quote David's prayer, “Purge me with hyssop”—that is, the hyssop dipped in blood—“and I shall be clean; wash me”—there is the water—“and I shall be whiter than snow;” and then, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.” Thus the blood, the water, and the Spirit were recognized of old

as necessary to cleanse from guilt, and if Jesus of Nazareth be indeed able to save his people from their sins, he must come with the triple gift—the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Now it was evidently so.

Our Lord was attested by *the Spirit*. The Spirit of God bore witness to Christ in the types and prophecies, “Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;” and Jesus Christ answers to those prophecies as exactly as a well-made key answers to the wards of a lock. By the power of the Holy Spirit our Lord’s humanity was fashioned and prepared for him, for the angel said unto Mary, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” When our Lord in due time commenced his public ministry, the Spirit of God descended upon him like a dove, and rested upon him, and a voice was heard from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This was indeed one of the surest seals of our Lord’s Messiahship, for it had been given by the Spirit of prophecy unto John as a token—“upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” The Spirit abode in our Lord without measure, throughout his whole public career, so that he is described as full of the Spirit and led of the Spirit. Hence his life and ministry were full of power. How truthfully he said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind.” Well said Peter, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him.” Mighty signs and miracles were the witness of the divine Spirit to the mission of the Lord Jesus. The Spirit abode with our Lord all his life long, and to crown all, after he had died and risen again, the Holy Ghost gave the fullest witness by descending in full power upon the disciples at Pentecost. The Lord had promised to baptise his disciples with the Holy Ghost, and they tarried at Jerusalem in expectation of the gift: nor were they disappointed, for on a sudden “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Those cloven tongues of fire, and the “rushing mighty wind,” were sacred tokens that he who had ascended was Lord and God. The apostles said, “We are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.” The word of the apostles, through the Holy Spirit, convinced men “of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,” as the Master had foretold; and then the Spirit comforted the penitents, and they believed in the exalted Savior and were baptised the selfsame day. The words of Jesus were abundantly fulfilled,—“When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.” Thus from our Lord’s birth, throughout his life, and after his ascension, the Holy Ghost bore conspicuous witness to him.

It is also manifest that our Lord came with *water* too. I have shown you that every priest was washed with water; our Lord was not unclean, and therefore one would have thought he might dispense with this; but to “fulfill all righteousness” his first step was to be washed in Jordan by the hands of John the Baptist, coming thus to the door of his ministry by that baptism in water which indicates that by death, burial, and resurrection, he was about to save his people. As soon as that baptism had been accomplished, ay, and before that, you could see that he had come with hater, for by water is signified that clean, pure, hallowed life which the outward washing was meant to typify. His first years of obscurity were years of holiness, and his after years of service were spotless.

“In him was no sin.” Who ever exercised a ministry so pure as his? Where else find we such immaculate holiness? He came not by the water merely as a symbol, but by that which the water meant, by unsullied purity of life. His doctrine was as pure as his example. Point me to a single syllable of all his teaching which would create, foster, or excuse sin! He was the friend of sinners, but not the apologist for their sins. His tenderness to sinners was that of a physician whose aim is to remove the disease. His whole doctrine is fitly comparable to purifying and life-giving water, and it operated upon men’s hearts in that manner. In this last sense especially he came by water. It is very remarkable how John’s Gospel is both the exposition and the text of John’s First Epistle, for if you turn to it you find our Lord Jesus coming by water at the outset of his teaching. To Nicodemus he says a man must be “born of water and of the Spirit;” to the woman of Samaria he speaks at large of “living water;” and on the great day of the feast he vies, “If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.” In his ministry he not only issued the invitation, but to all who believed on him he gave of the water of the fountain life freely. Thus our Lord came by water in the sense of communicating a new; pure, and purifying life to men; for the water is the Emblem of the new life which springs up within the soul of believers, a life fresh and sparkling, leaping up from the eternal fountains of the divine existence; a life which will flow on for ever, and widen and deepen like Ezekiel’s river, and increase in fullness of power and joy until it unites with the ocean of immortal bliss. Jesus came to pour forth this living flood among the sons of men. Blessed be his name!

Our Lord closed his life with washing his disciples’ feet, a fit conclusion to a life which had by its example been cleansing throughout, and still remains as the grandest corrective of the corrupt examples of the world. Even after death our Lord retained the instructive symbol by giving forth from his pierced heart water as well as blood, which John evidently thought very significant; for when he wrote concerning it he said, “He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.” So that from the Jordan to the cross both the symbol and the substance were with our great Master, while his own personal purity, and his gift of life to others, proved his mission to be from above.

With Jesus also was *the blood*. This distinguished him from John the Baptist, who came by water, but Jesus came “not by water only, but by water and blood.” We must not prefer any one of the three witnesses to another, but what a wonderful testimony to Christ was the blood! From the very first he came with blood, for John the Baptist cried, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! “Now, the lamb which takes away sin is a slaughtered lamb, a bleeding lamb; so that at the time when the baptismal waters were upon him, John saw that he must bleed for human sin. In his ministry there was often a clear testimony to his future sufferings and shedding of blood, for to the assembled crowd he said, “Except a man eat my flesh and drink my blood, there is no life in him:” while to his disciples he spake of the decease which he should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem. Then at the last, taking all our sins upon his shoulders, in the agony of Gethsemane, the blood bore witness that he was indeed the Lamb of God, and on yonder tree where he

“Bore all incarnate God could bear,

With strength enough, but none to spare,”

disinterestedly dying for his enemies, unselfishly suffering an ignominious doom that he might redeem those who had rejected and scoffed at him, his invincible love triumphed over death itself, and endured divine wrath without repining, as none but the Son of God could have done. Now Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself; he was to make his soul an offering for sin, he was

to make his grave with the wicked, and lie in the heart of the earth. The blood of the covenant was to be shed, the paschal victim was to be slain, the Shepherd was to be smitten, the Lamb was to be led to the slaughter, and therefore only by the shedding of his blood could Jesus prove himself to be the Messiah so long foretold. However pure the life he led, had he never died he could not have been the Savior appointed to bear the iniquity of us all. The blood was needed to complete the witness. The blood must now with the water, the suffering with the serving. The most pious example would not have proved him to be the divine Shepherd, if he had not laid down his life for the sheep. Take away the atonement, and Jesus is no more than any other prophet, the essential point of his mission is gone. It is evident that he who was to come was to finish transgression, and to make reconciliation for iniquity. Now, this could not be done except by an expiation, and as Jesus has made such an expiation by his own blood, we know him to be the Christ of God. His blood is the seal of his mission, the very life of his work.

I have thus shown that our Lord himself was attested by these three sacred witnesses.

II. Now, secondly, may God the Holy Spirit help me to show that **THESE THREE REMAIN AS STANDING WITNESSES TO HIM TO ALL TIME.**

And first, *the Holy Spirit* is witness at this hour that the religion of Jesus is the truth, and that Jesus is the Son of God. I say not that he bears such witness everywhere, for there are many that preach in the wisdom of men, and in carnal excellency of speech, and God the Holy Ghost does not work with them, because he hath chosen other instruments. I do not say that he bears witness to the truth when it is defiled by a lukewarm ministry, and a prayerless church: but I do say this, that the Spirit of God, wherever Jesus is fully preached, is the great witness to the truth of his word; for what does he do? By his divine energy he convinces men of the truth of the gospel: and these so convinced are not only persons who, through their education are likely to believe it, but men like Saul of Tarsus who abhor the whole thing. He pours his influences upon men, and infidelity melts away like the iceberg in the Gulf Stream; he touches the indifferent and careless, and they repent, believe, and obey the Savior. He makes proud men tremble, and wicked men quake for fear. The conversions which are wrought where Christ is truly preached are the miracles which attest the truth of the gospel. He who can make the harlot to be chaste, the drunkard to be sober, the thief to be honest, the malicious to be forgiving, the covetous to be generous, and above all the self-righteous to be humble, is indeed the Christ of God, and when the Spirit does all this and more by the gospel, he bears conclusive witness to the power of the cross.

Then, too, the Spirit goes forth among believers, and by them he bears witness to our Lord and his gospel. Great is the variety of his operations, for which cause he is called the Seven Spirits of God; but in each one he witnesses to Jesus; whether he quickens, consoles, enlightens, refreshes, sanctifies, anoints, or inflames the soul, he does it always by taking the things of Christ and revealing them to us. How mightily does he comfort the saints! Have you not been consoled by him in deep distress? Have you not endured the loss of dear ones without repining, because your heart has been sustained by the Comforter? Now, that wondrous influence which wrought peace in you through the gospel, must have confirmed you in the belief of the truth: and others who have seen your serenity under heavy trial, if they are not convinced, at least are led to inquire what strange thing is this which makes the Christian suffer without repining. The Spirit bears witness to Christ, then, when he comforts the saints.

And he does the same when he gives them guidance, enlightenment and elevation of soul I will, however, for a moment, dwell upon "utterance." Some reject the idea, but for all that it is true that

in the selfsame hour it is given to God's servants to speak in his name. Look at the martyr times! How wondrously feeble women like Anne Askew baffled all their foes! How ignorant weavers stood up before bishops and doctors and confounded them! Even now, in answer to prayer, the Spirit comes upon chosen men who yield themselves to his influence. And bears them along with a whirlwind, making them eloquent in the divine sense, speaking out of their hearts that which God gives them to deliver. Some of us know this, for we have cast ourselves upon that eternal Spirit, and thoughts have been given us, and mouth and utterance also. By this also the Spirit bears witness to the truth of our faith.

I have not time to go into all the operations of the Spirit, only let me say that his sustaining, his consoling influences have been very especially seen in persecuting times. Men of God have been subjected to tortures which our mind finds it painful to dwell upon, yet they have not been vanquished by their foes; neither nakedness, nor peril, nor sword have separated them from the love of God. Blandina tossed in a net by a wild bull, and burned with hot plates of brass, wearies out her tormentors; and Lawrence, on his gridiron, finds joy enough for mirth. One cries aloud amid the flames, "None but Jesus," and another claps his blazing hands and shouts victory as his soul quits the body. The Spirit of God in the church has preserved her amid persecutions furious and long-continued, filling the saints with a dauntless courage and a serene invincibility which has both amazed and alarmed their enemies. So mightily has this patience convinced the world, that it has passed into a proverb, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

With equal power does the Spirit of God bear witness to the gospel in great revivals of religion. How wondrously did the Spirit of God testify to Christ during the Reformation! Scarcely had Luther opened his mouth to proclaim the good news than straightway men received it eagerly; they sang psalms as they ploughed the field or threw the shuttle; the precious word was in all men's mouths. They said that angels carried Luther's writings all over the world: it was not so, but the ever-blessed Spirit makes the truth to fly like flames of fire. So was it in Whitfield's day, and in many revivals which we have read of, and some which we have seen. Sometimes men have been struck down and convulsed, and at other times, without outward violence, they have been with equal power renewed in their souls. Who that has been at Edinburgh, and seen many hundreds of people rushing through the streets to one appointed meeting-place, to fall on their knees and cry for mercy all at once, could doubt but what the gospel must be true? The Spirit of God, omnipotent in the realm of spirits, and able to guide the human will without violating it, has enlightened men's darkened minds and made them see that Jesus Christ is God and Savior. Overwhelmed by the love of Jesus, they have yielded at once to his commands, A formal church, with a minister to stand up and talk officially, and a people who come and go mechanically, bears no witness to religion, but rather creates infidels; but where we see what some have called "real Methodist fire," and others "the old Protestant enthusiasm," or, rather, where we see the Holy Ghost, attended by marvellous conversion, deep repentance, singular illumination, the angelic and general love, we have indisputable evidence of the divinity of our faith.

The next abiding witness in the church is *the water*—not the water of baptism, but the new life implanted in Christians, for that is the sense in which John's Master had used the word "water": "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Where the Spirit of God comes he creates in the man a new nature, pure, bright, fresh, vigorous, like a fountain, and the fact that this new nature does exist in multitudes of men is a standing evidence that the gospel is true, for no other religion makes men new creatures, no other religion

even pretends to do it; they may propose to improve the old nature, but none of them can say, "Behold, I make all things new." This is the sole prerogative of Jesus our Lord.

The existence of the new life is matter of fact. We ourselves know many whose lives are pure and blameless; they have faults before God, but before the eyes of men they are perfect and upright, blameless and harmless. The godly lives of Christians are good evidence of the truth of the gospel. Did I hear some one object, "But many professors of Christianity are not holy"? I grant you it, but then everybody knows that they are inconsistent with the religion which they profess. If I heard of a lustful Mahomedan I should not consider him inconsistent with Mahomedanism; is he not allowed his harem? If I heard of a licentious Hindoo, I should not consider him to be dishonoring his religion, for some of its sacred rites are disgusting and unmentionable. The same may be said of all the idolatries. But everybody knows that if a man professes to be a Christian and he is guilty of a gross fault, the world rings with the scandal, because it recognizes the inconsistency of his conduct with his profession. Though some may at the first breath of a slander blazon it abroad and say, "This is your religion," the world knows it is not our religion, but the want of it. Why do they themselves make such a wonder of a fallen professor? Are adulterers so very scarce that such a noise should be made when a minister is, truly or falsely, charged with the crime? The world's conscience knows that the religion of Jesus is the religion of purity, and if professed Christians fall into uncleanness the world knows that such a course of action does not arise out of the religion of Christ, but is diametrically opposite to it. The gospel is perfect, and did we wholly yield to its sway sin would be abhorred by us, and slain in us, and we should live on earth the life of the perfect ones above. Oh, may God produce in his church more and more the witness of the new life, the testimony of holiness, love, meekness, temperance, godliness, and grace: these are the gospel's logic, its syllogisms and demonstrations, which none can refute.

The third abiding witness is *the blood*. The blood of Christ is still on the earth, for when Jesus bled it fell upon the ground and was never gathered up. O earth, thou still art bespattered with the blood of the murdered Son of God, and if thou cost reject him this will curse thee. But, O humanity, thou art blessed with the drops of that precious blood, and believing in him it doth save thee. Now, does the blood really save from guilt, terror, and despair? Does it operate among men? Let us our memory. Its answer is clear and full. I speak what I do know, and testify what I have seen. I have preached the blood of Jesus Christ and the love of the incarnate God, and I have seen proud, stout-hearted men shed tears in floods; the rock has wept when smitten with this wondrous rod of the cross. Men who could resist thee thunders of Sinai have melted before the tender notes of Calvary. Ay, and, on the other hand, I have seen the desponding, whose soul chose strangling rather than life, look up to that dear cross, and their faces have been brightened, and a joy unspeakable has chased away despair. Miracles of consolation the blood has wrought. We have seen men at war with God, and opposed to holiness, to whom the blood has spoken; they have seen a God reconciled to them, and they have been reconciled to him themselves. We have seen them beneath the spell of the blood throw down their weapons and cry—

"I yield, by Jesus' love subdued,—
Who can resist its charms?—
And throw myself to be reserved
Into my Savior's arms."

The blood of Jesus, after speaking peace to the conscience, inflames the heart with fervent love, and full often leads men to high deeds of consecration, self-denial, and self-sacrifice, such as can

scarce be understood till they are traced back to that amazing love which bled upon the tree. Well might the martyrs bleed for him who was crucified for them; the blood is working mightily in men to will and to do for the glory of God. Yes, brethren, the blood has such a melting, such a converting, such a subduing, such a sanctifying, such a joy-creating power to every conscience which hears its matchless voice, that it remains, with the Spirit and the water, a convincing witness to the Christ of God.

III. In the third place, let us observe that THIS TRIPLE YET UNITED WITNESS IS PECULIARLY FORCIBLE WITHIN BELIEVING HEARTS. John tells us, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." Now, brethren, these three witnesses bear testimony in our souls abidingly. I speak not of years ago, but of last night, when you bowed your knee in prayer and prayed, and were heard. Did not the Spirit when he helped you to pray bear witness that the gospel was no lie? Was not the answer to your prayer good evidence? And that Sabbath morning, when you prayed that you might gather up your thoughts and forget the week's cares, and you did so by the Spirit's aid, did not this sacred rest of your soul prove that Christ is indeed a Savior? Sitting here this morning as your soul has burned within you, and your Master has been near you, has not that communion, given you of the Spirit, been to you a fresh witness to Christ? The other day, when you were so sad and the Holy Spirit comforted you, when you were so rebellious, and he made you quiet, even as a weaned child, did not this confirm your faith? The other day when you were so in the dark, and he enlightened you, when you were in such dilemmas and he guided you had you not then fresh evidence that there is a life, a power, a divinity about the gospel? These sweet feelings of yours came to you by the Spirit of God revealing Jesus to you. He did not comfort you nor elevate you by the law, nor by the flesh, but by the love of God shed abroad in your heart, that precious love which comes streaming down from the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord. Ah, dear friends, I feel sick to death of the common talk about the healthiness of doubting and the beauty of "modern thought." This talk is only the self-praise of a set of concealed infidels treacherously lurking in God's church. There is a short way with sceptics which I commend to your use. Ask them—Do they know the Holy Ghost? Did they ever feel him in their own souls? If they say "No," we believe them; let them believe us when we declare that we do feel the operations of the Holy Ghost. There is the end of the controversy; if they are honest so are we, and we are witnesses to the divine working of the Holy Ghost in our own souls. If they never felt his power, their negative statements cannot in the least degree affect the truth of ours.

The next witness in us is *the water*, or the new and pure life. Do you feel the inner life, my brethren? I know you do—you feel it fighting, struggling, contending, sometimes winning the mastery, and at other times captive and groaning; you feel it often aspiring, desiring, hungering, thirsting, yearning, sighing; and sometimes singing, shouting, dancing, and leaping up to heaven. You are conscious that you are not what you used to be, you are conscious of a new life within your soul which you never knew till the date of your conversion, and that new life within you is the living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever. The fact that you know you are born of God forbids a doubt as to the truth by which you were begotten; the sense that you are forgiven forbids all scepticism as to the fact that Christ is come in the flesh, and that he is the Son of God, and that his gospel is the truth of God. To you all these things are clear.

Witnessing within us is also *the blood*. Beloved, this is a witness which never fails, speaking in us better things than the blood of Abel. It gives us such peace that we can sweetly live and calmly die. It gives us such access to God that sometimes when we have felt its power we have drawn as

near to our Father as if we had seen him face to face. And oh, what safety the blood causes us to enjoy! We feel that we cannot perish while the crimson canopy of atonement by blood hangs over our head. What victory it gives us! making us cry, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." These are mysterious sensations, not to be accounted for by fleshly enthusiasm, for they are strongest when we are calmest; not to be accounted for by any natural predilections to such emotions, for we are by nature as easily perturbed as others, and as apt to forget divine things. In times of trial we have looked to Jesus' flowing wounds and we have been comforted, we have found communion with Jesus to be so blessed that we would not envy Gabriel his angelhood.

Now, then, you young men, you need not read "Paley's Evidences," the evidence of the Spirit, the water, and the blood is better. You do not grant to study "Butler's Analogy," though you may if you please, but such books, excellent as they are, only prove the skin and shell of our religion, and the vital matter is the kernel. If you come by simple prayer, and ask to have the blood of Jesus applied to devour soul, and if the Spirit of God works mightily in your spirit so that you obtain a new inner principle, and lead a new life as the result thereof, you will have the best evidence in the world. You will laugh at doubters, and make a fire of Colenso's objections, and "Essays and Reviews," Tyndal's challenge, and Huxley's dreams, and all that heap of worthless muck which has polluted the church, and defiled the souls of men. O heavens, that ever we should live to see a day in which ministers tell us that it is good to doubt, when poets almost deify that very scepticism of which John says that it makes God a liar, and which therefore is to be denounced as an insult to God, and the curse of the age. Go, fling your doubts away, ye doting men and dreaming women, and bow like penitents at Jesus' feet, and you will find far more than all your fancied learning can bestow. But if ye will not do this, yet know that in vain ye arraign your Maker at your bar, in vain do you re-judge his judgment, and act as if ye were the Gods of God!

Thus I have tried to show that these three witnesses testify in our souls; I beg you now to notice *their order*. These three bear witness in us thus, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; why in this order? Because in this manner they operate. The Spirit of God first enters the heart, perhaps long before the man knows that such is the case; the Spirit creates the new life, which repents and seeks the Savior, that is the water; and that new life flies to the blood of Jesus and obtains peace. The Spirit mightily working, the new life is secretly created, and then faith in the blood is begotten, and the triple witness is complete. We have also found this to be the order of our consolation. I have said to myself, "Do I know that the Spirit of God is in me?" and I have been afraid that it is not; I have then turned to my inner life, the water, and have not always been certain concerning it, but when I have looked away to the blood, all has been clear enough! Jesus died; I throw myself once again into his arms. When I do not know whether I have the Spirit, and when I am in doubt as to whether I have the living water, I still know that I believe in the blood, and this brings perfect peace.

Having observed their order, now note *their combination*. "These three agree in one," therefore every true believer should have the witness of each one, and if each one does not witness in due time, there is cause for grave suspicion. For instance, persons have arisen who have said the Spirit of God has led them to do this and that. Of them we inquire what are your lives? Does the water bear witness? Are you pardoned? Does the blood testify for you? If these questions cannot be answered they may rave as they like about the Spirit of God, but the witness to their salvation is open to the gravest suspicion. We have known some who will say, "Look at my life, I am very different from what I was. I am a sober, honest, excellent man." Yes, but do you Test in the blood

of Jesus? Practical evidence is good, but it must arise out of faith. If you do not believe in Jesus you have not the essential witness, and your case is not proved. Many also say to us, "I believe that Jesus died for me," but we must ask them concerning their lives. Are you cleansed in act? Are you an altered man? For remember, unless the water speaks with the blood, you have not the three-fold testimony. There may be some who say, "Well, we believe in Jesus, and our lives are changed": but remember, you may say that, but is it so? If so, the Spirit of God has changed you: if you have merely excited yourself into the belief that it is so, or if you were born by your own free will, you have not the witness, because the truly saved are born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of the Spirit of God.

The three witnesses agree in one. He believes in pardon by the blood believes also in sanctification by the water; he who rests in Jesus Christ's blood always honors the Spirit of God, and, on the other hand, he that believes in the Holy Ghost values both the inner life and the cleansing blood. God has joined these three together, and let no man put them asunder. The old theologians spake of *baptismus fluminis*, *baptismus fluminis*, and *baptismus sanguinis*. May we know all these, and rejoice in the Spirit, the flood, and the blood.

IV. Lastly, THESE WITNESSES CERTIFY TO US THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF OUR RELIGION. Is *the Spirit* working through the gospel? then the gospel will win the day, because the Spirit of God is Almighty, and complete master over the realm of mind. He has the power to illuminate the intellect, to win the affections, to curb the will, and change the entire nature of man, for he worketh all things after his own pleasure, and, like the wind, he "bloweth where he listeth." When he puts forth his omnipotent energy none can stand against him. He has converted three thousand in a day, and he could as readily convert three millions, or three hundred millions. He can do this, and he will. The wind at times blows so gently as scarcely to stir the wing of a butterfly, but at another time it rushes in a tornado, sweeping all before it; do not judge from its soft breath what its full tempest would be, for nothing can stand against the wind when once it speeds forth with power. Let the Spirit of God blow across this land and it will at once drive away the miasmas of superstition, and the clouds of ignorance.

The Holy Spirit is compared to fire. What can resist the energy of fire? There may be so little of it that a cowherd may carry it in his lantern, but lo, it sets a city on a blaze. One match contains all the fire on yonder prairie; it is flung into the dry grass, and lo, the heavens themselves are scorched with the exceeding heat. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Is anything too hard for the lord? Behold, the universe was chaos once, and the Spirit brooded over it and this fair world came forth: let him in like manner incubate over this chaos of sin, and a new heaven, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, shall rise therefrom. The gospel must conquer, because the Holy Ghost who works with it is almighty.

Next, the gospel must conquer, because of *the water*, which I have explained to be the new life of purity. What says John? "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." It is impossible for the gospel to be vanquished so long as there remains in the world one soul that is born of God. Living and incorruptible seed abideth for ever! Those who would destroy the church only scatter her living seeds, and when Satan raises a hurricane it only bears those seeds further afield. Satan once sat down for weeks together to scheme, and he called in all the devils one by one till Pandemonium all met in one conclave, and what think you came of it all? The Papal Inquisition. They set that horrible machine to work to crush out what they called heresy. They said they would ride up to their saddle girths in the blood of Lutherans, and they almost redeemed their promise;

but their cruelty availed not, the living faith survived, and their murders and infernal cruelties did but stir the world to a groan of sympathy, which helped the progress of the gospel. They cannot destroy the gospel. Do not talk about the Pope of Rome, or the Ritualistic or the infidel party, destroying the gospel church, they can as soon annihilate the Lord himself, because the inner life of Christians is a spark struck from the eternal sun of life, and can never be extinct while God lives.

Lastly, the gospel must spread and conquer because of *the blood*. Has that power? Oh, yes, I will tell you how. God, the everlasting Father, has promised to Jesus by covenant, of which the blood is the seal, that he “shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.” As surely as Christ died on the cross, he must sit on a universal throne. God cannot lie to his Son, cannot mock his wounds, or be deaf to his death-cries, and, therefore, Christ must have what his Father has promised him, and he has said, “Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” They that bow in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust; for he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Brethren, the inference from all this is, if you are not on Christ's side it is ill with you, for you will be surely conquered in the battle: but, if you are on Christ's side, never speak hesitatingly or despondingly. When they bring out a new book to disprove Genesis, and another to evaporate the atonement, do not be afraid. As long as the gospel is in the world the devil will find somebody to write books against it. Take no notice of them, they cannot stand against facts. A philosopher once wrote a book to prove that there is no such thing as matter, and a certain reader believed it till he chanced to knock his head against the bedpost, and then he abandoned the theory. When a man feels the power of the Holy Spirit, or the power of the inner life, he does not care to argue; he has a homespun philosophy of facts which answers his purpose better. Though others may round upon him and say, “You are not learned,” he feels that it does not need learning to prove that which is a matter of personal consciousness, any more than we need proof that sugar is sweet when we have a piece in our mouths. Do you doubt the gospel? Try it! The men who speak against the Bible as a rule have never read it; those who rail against Christ do not know him; and those who deny the efficacy of prayer have never prayed. Nothing is more convincing than fact. Get out of the realm of word-spinning and wind-bag-filling into practical Christian life, proving personally that these things are so, and you will soon be convinced by the blessed witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 5.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—335, 451, 331.

A Word for the Persecuted

A Sermon

(No. 1188)

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, August 16th, 1874, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“What if thy father answer thee roughly?”—1 Samuel 20:10.

IT WAS NOT AN UNLIKELY THING that his father would answer Jonathan roughly. Saul had taken great umbrage against David, while Jonathan his eldest son, on the contrary, loved David as his own soul. Jonathan could hardly think that his father really meant harm to so good a man as David, and he expressed to David that opinion, and then David, to be prepared for the worst, put to him this question, “What if thy father answer thee roughly?” It did so turn out. Saul answered his son with bitter words, and in the desperation of his anger he even hurled a javelin at him to smite him; yet Jonathan did not forsake David, he clung to him with all the faithfulness of love, and until his death, which was much mourned by David, he remained his fast and faithful friend. Now, this question of David to Jonathan is one which I wish to put this morning to all believers in Christ, especially to the younger ones who have lately entered into covenant with the great Son of David, and who, in the ardor of their hearts, feel that they could live and die for him. I want to put before them the supposition that they will meet with opposition from their dearest friends, that perhaps their father, brother, husband, or uncle will answer them roughly, or perhaps their mother, wife, or sister will become a persecutor to them. What then? What will they do under such circumstances? Will they follow the Lord through evil report? “What if thy father answer thee roughly?”

Remember that this supposition is a very likely one. There are a few Christians so favourably circumstanced that all their friends accompany them in the pilgrimage to heaven. What advances they ought to make in the sacred journey! What excellent Christians they ought to be! They are like plants in a conservatory—they ought to grow and bring forth the loveliest Bowers of divine grace. But there are not very many who are altogether in that case. The large proportion of Christians find themselves opposed by those of their own family, or by those with whom they labor or trade. Is it not likely to be so? Was it not so from the beginning? Is there not enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman? Did not Cain slay his brother Abel because he was accepted of the Lord? In the family of Abraham was there not an Ishmael born after the flesh, who persecuted Isaac, who was born after the Spirit? Was not Joseph hated of his brethren? Was not David persecuted by Saul, Daniel by the Persian princes, and Jeremiah by the kings of Israel? Has it not ever been so? Did not the Lord Jesus Christ himself meet with slander, cruelty, and death, and did he not tell us that we must not look for favor where he found rejection? He said plainly, “I came not to send peace upon the earth, but a sword;” and he declared that the immediate result of the preaching of the gospel would be to set the son against the father and the father against the son, so that a man's foes should be they of his own household. Did he not carefully inquire of every recruit who wished to enlist in his army, “Have you counted the cost?” Have you not admired his perfect honesty and admirable caution in dealing with men, when he bids them remember that if they follow him they

must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and be content to be hated of all men for his sake? He warns us not to expect that the disciple will be above his Master, for if men have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, they will assuredly confer no sweet titles upon his household. Since our Lord has forewarned us, it is well for us to stand ready for the trial which he predicts, and to ask ourselves whether we are ready to bear oppression for Christ's sake. I press the question Upon you who think of avowing yourselves believers, for most likely it will come practically home to you, and it is well when you begin to build a house to calculate whether you will be able to finish it.

There are very many of God's servants here, whose life is made bitter by the continual worry they endure from their ungodly relatives and associates. Often do they sigh for the wings of a dove to fly away and be at rest. I feel the deepest sympathy with them, and it is not Only with the intention of forearming the younger ones, but with the hope of cheering and consoling those who have been long in the fiery furnace, that I shall speak this morning upon this text, "What if thy father answer thee roughly?"

I. Our first point is this, WHAT YOU MAY DO, what there is a possibility of your doing, should your friends answer you roughly. In the first confidence of your love to Christ you go and tell father of your conversion; well, what if he should ridicule it all? You run to mother, and communicate your change of heart; what if she should scoff at it? You tell a little of your heart to some friend; what if that friend should turn again and rend you? I will tell you what perhaps you will do, though I earnestly pray that you may do no such thing. *You may "by-and-by be offended."* I mean that you may leave Christ altogether, because you cannot bear his cross, and though willing enough to go to heaven with him if the way were smooth, it may be that, like Mr. Pliable, finding that there is a slough to be got through, you will turn your back upon the good country and return to the City of Destruction. Many have done so. Our Lord's parable of the seed sown in stony places teaches us that many shoots which promise fair for harvest, perish when the sun arises with burning heat because they have no root. Observation confirms this statement. If yonder fair-weather professors of religion could have been daily hailed with general acclamation, they would, after a certain fashion, have continued steadfast; but inasmuch as they have met with rebuffs and chills which they never bargained for, they have cast off all religion and joined with the fashionable world. To such the earthly father is dearer than the Father who is in heaven; the brother after the flesh is dearer than that Brother who is born for adversity, and the ungodly husband is more precious than the everlasting bridegroom; and so they desert their Lord.

Or, it may happen to you that, instead of being by-and-by offended, you may continue for awhile, but *you may gradually give way, and at last yield altogether.* There are many among us who could bear to lose our heads at a stroke for Christ, but to be burned at a slow fire—ah, that would try us! And if that slow fire lasted not for a day or so, but for weeks, and months, and years! How then? If, after much patient endurance, the cruel mockings still continue, if the hard words and bitter speeches never cease—how then? Surely, unless grace sustains us, the flesh will clamor to be rid of this uneasy yoke, and will look out for some by-path by which it may escape the rigor of the rough road and go back again to the world. Grace will hold on and out to the end, but nature at her best, with firmest resolutions, has only to be tried up to a certain point, and it will surely yield. This is what we may do; but may God grant that we may be preserved from such a wretched course of action, for, if we do give way because of opposition from ungodly friends, it involves tremendous guilt. To give up religion because of persecution is to prefer ourselves to florist, to be

selfish enough to regard our own ease rather than this glory, to consult our own peace rather than his honor, though we have said that we love him beyond all else for redeeming us by his blood. It will show that we love him not at all, but are ungrateful, false, and hypocritical. With all our true professions, if we flinch from persecution it will prove that we only want our price, and, like the traitor Judas, we too will sell our Master, not for thirty pieces of silver possibly, but to escape ridicule or avoid ill-will.

It will become clear, also, that we prefer the praise of man to the approval of God. A smile from a face which is soon to die we value at a higher price than the love of God, or the Redeemer's approbation. Peter for a moment was more affected by the question of a silly maid than by his allegiance to his Lord, but how dreadful to fall into that condition deliberately, and think more of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that is but as a worm, than of the Lord our Maker and Judge, who alone is to be feared. Is not this folly, treason, and dire iniquity?

To forsake the Lord through persecution is to set time before eternity, to barter heaven for this world's pleasures, to renounce eternal life for a few hours of ease, and to involve ourselves in endless misery rather than endure a stupid jest or a senseless jibe. It comes to that. Many a man has had life and death set before him, the life has been shaded with the cross, and the death has been gilded over with transient merriment, and he has chosen the everlasting death with its glitter in preference to eternal life with its momentary trial. May God grant we may never be of so insane a mind, for if we are, we shall be numbered with those mentioned in the Revelation, of whom it is said that "the fearful," which is being interpreted the cowardly, "and the unbelieving, the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars"—for that is the class of persons with whom cowards are membered—"shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8), from which death may the infinite mercy of God deliver us. Like true soldiers may we buckle on our harness and resolve that let the battle rage as it may, through divine grace we will not desert our colors. We prefer death itself to the disgrace of forsaking a cause so true, a doctrine so pure, a Savior so gracious, a Prince so noble, and so worthy of our most loyal service.

But if left to ourselves we may fall into what is as bad as open apostasy. When we find the father, or the wife, or the friend answering us roughly, *we may make a pitiful compromise between Christ and the world*. I warn you solemnly against this above everything else. It has the look of being the prudent and proper thing to do. "Can I not please men and please God? May I not go a little way with Christ and a little way with the world?" O soul, if you attempt this you must fail, and moreover you will have chosen the roughest road of all, for if a man serves God, and serves him thoroughly, he will meet with many comforts to balance his crosses; and if a man serves Satan thoroughly he will enjoy whatever poor comfort is to be got out of sin; but if he goes betwixt and between he will feel the discomforts of both, and the pleasures of neither. Running the gauntlet on board ship is not worse than attempting to be friends with Christ and Satan at the same time. I believe many a professing woman has given way at first to her ungodly husband, where she should have been decided, and she has embittered all the rest of her life; and many a husband, many a son, many a man of business, has been undecided in a minor matter for peace sake, and from that very moment the other side has never believed in his sincerity, and having given an inch, the world has demanded its ell, and there has been an end to all liberty henceforth. If you yield a single point of honesty or true religion, the unconverted will not believe in you as they would have done if you had been firm throughout; men respect a thoroughbred Christian, but nobody has a good word for

a mongrel. Be one thing or the other, either hot or cold, or Christ will reject you, and the world too. If a thing be right, do it; if you resolve to serve the Lord, do it, offend or please; and if, on the other hand, you prefer the service of Satan, do at least be honest enough not to pretend to be on the Lord's side. Remember the challenge of Elijah, "If God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him;" but do not attempt a compromise, which will end in a miserable breakdown. Mark Antony drove two lions yoked together through the streets of Rome, but no Mark Antony could ever drive the lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the pit in a leash together. They will never agree. Be ye warned, then, against falling into the meanness of compromise, for compromise is nothing better than varnished rebellion against God, a mockery of his claims, and an insult to his judgment. May the grace of God keep us from this, for left to ourselves we shall fall into this snare.

I will tell you what you may do also, and I pray that the Holy Spirit may lead you to do it. *You may take up humbly, but firmly, this decided stand:*—"If my father answer me roughly he must do so, but I have another Father who is in heaven, and I shall appeal to him. If the world condemn me, I shall accept its condemnation as a confirmation of that gracious verdict of acquittal which comes from the great Judge of all, for I do remember it is written, 'If the world hate you ye know that it hated me before it hated you' and 'If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.'" Be it ours to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. May we count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all earth's treasures. Never may a coward blush defile our cheek because we are ashamed of Jesus; far rather may we be willing to be made a gazing-stock than for a moment think of turning aside from our Beloved Lord. False or fearful may we never be; firmly and calmly, with the confidence of a love which cannot falter, let us cleave to our Lord, even though all men should forsake him:—

"Oh, learn to scorn the praise of men!
 Oh, learn to lose with God;
 For Jesus won the world through shame,
 And beckons thee His road."

II. The second head is WHAT THE TRIAL WILL, DO FOR US IF WE ARE HELPED TO BEAR UP UNDER IT. "What if thy father answer thee roughly? "First, *it will grieve us*. It is by no means pleasant to be opposed in doing right by those who ought to help us in it. It is very painful to flesh and blood to go contrary to those we love. Moreover, those who hate Christians have a way of putting their revilings so that they are sure to make us wince. They watch our weak points, and with very wonderful skill they turn their discoveries to account; trained by the old master of all malice, they are not slow to ply their lash where we are most tender. If one thing is more provoking than another, they will be sure to say it, and say it when we are least able to bear it. It may be they are very polite people, and if so, your refined persecutors have a very dainty way of cutting to the bone, and yet smiling all the while. They can say a malicious thing so delicately that you can neither resent it nor endure it. The art of persecuting has been so long studied by the seed of the serpent that they are perfect masters of it, and know how to make the iron enter into the soul. Do not be astonished, therefore, if you are sorely vexed, neither be amazed, as though some strange thing kind happened unto you. The martyrs did not suffer sham pains; the racks on which they were stretched were not beds of ease, nor were their prisons parlours of comfort. Their pains were agonies, their martyrdoms were torments. If you had sham griefs you might expect counterfeit joys; let the reality of your tribulation assure you of the reality of the coming glory.

The opposition of your friends *will try your sincerity*. If you are a hypocrite you will soon yield to opposition. "The game is not worth the candle," say you, and you will be off, and for the church's sake very likely it will be a blessing, for the wheat is all the better for being rid of the chaff, and if the wind of persecution can blow you away you are chaff. The rough answers of opponents will *try your faith*. You say you believe in Jesus: now we shall see if you do, for if you cannot bear a little trial from men and women, surely you will not be able to bear the worse trials from the devil and his angels. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how easiest thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" "If you cannot bear the trials of life, how will you endure the ordeals of death?"

Persecution will *try your love to Jesus*. If you really love him you will cheerfully stand in the pillory of reproach with him, and when enemies have filth to hurl you will say, "Throw it upon me rather than upon him: if there is a hard thing to be said, say it about me rather than against my Lord."

"If on my face for his dear name
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
For he'll remember me."

It will try your love, I say, and so it will all your graces in their turn; and this is good for you. These virtues will not increase in strength unless they are brought into action; and if they are not tested, who is to know of what sort they are? Your valiant soldier in quiet barracks at home could fight, no doubt, but how do you know till he has passed through a campaign? He who has charged up to the cannon's mouth, he who is adorned with a sabre cut across his brow, and bears many a wound beside, which he gained in the service of his king, he is brave beyond question. Good gold must expect to be tried in the fire, and these oppositions are sent on purpose that our faith, and our love, and all our graces should be proved genuine by enduring the test.

The rough answers of those who should be our friends *will keep us awake*. I think it was Erskine who used to say, "Lord, deliver me from a sleepy devil"; and truly it is a prayer well worth praying. When everything goes on smoothly, and nobody ridicules us, we are very apt to be off our guard, but when we are stung by undeserved reproaches and insults, and when for our love we receive only anger or unkindness, we are not very likely to go to sleep. Such afflictions *drive you to your knees*. Perhaps you have read the story of Mr. Eraser, one of the ministers in Ross-shire, who had a cold, unfeeling woman for a wife; she was very cruel to him, and would never allow light or fire in his study, so that he had actually worn two holes in the plaster at the ends of his room, where his hand had touched as he paced to and fro in the dark. At a meeting of ministers who were not of his mind in divine things, one of them thought to make sport of him by remarking that he would no doubt very heartily agree with the toast of "Health to our wives." To their astonishment he answered, "Mine has been a better wife to me than any of yours has been to you, she has sent me to my knees seven times a day, when I would not otherwise have gone, which is more than any of you can say of yours." Personally I should greatly prefer not to have such a perpetual blister applied to me, but had the good Physician appointed me so severe a trial, I doubt not that he would have had good reason for it. Out of what men call weeds the wise man extracts a medicine, and out of these bitter trials the Lord produces a sacred tonic which braces us for a higher life of communion with himself.

Trials from the enemies of Jesus *confirm our faith*. Those who are never tried usually possess a poor, tottering faith, but trial, especially persecution, is like the rough March wind which goes howling through the forest, and while the young oaks are almost torn up by the roots at first, it loosens the soil for them, and they send out more rootless, till they get such a firm grip that they defy the hurricane. That which shakes them at first strengthens them afterwards. The tried saint is the bold saint, and the firm saint; therefore take the rough answer joyfully, and look for good results from it. A little persecution for the church in England would be a grand thing for her. We have fallen on very velvety days, when zeal for God is rare and decision for truth scarcely to be met with. The church has made terms with the world, and goes to sleep, Satan rocking her cradle. Many a man professes to be a Christian, who is nothing better than a baptized worldling, and many a man sets up to be a minister of Christ who is a mere reader of other people's sermons, and a hireling who cares not for the sheep. The fan of persecution, if it purged the threshing floor of the church, would bestow great benefits upon her.

Rough speeches, too, will have this good effect upon genuine Christians, it will *lead them to plead for those who utter them*. I remember a good man who used to say of a certain swearing fellow who took delight to vex him with his horrid taunts and oaths, "Well, after all, I might forget to pray for him, but he reminds me of it, for he will not let me go by without a curse." If our friends were all very smooth-spoken, and concealed their enmity to Christ, we might entertain a false hope about them, and we might not pray for them; but when we see that the old nature is there, and very rampant, it drives us to intercession for them, and who can tell but what the Lord may give us their souls as our reward?

Certainly opposition has another good effect, that *it drives those subject to it into the truly separated path*; they are known to be Christians, and proclaimed as such by their revilers. I do not think it is a bad thing, young man, when you go to that warehouse that they should advertise you as a Christian by crying out "Halloa, here comes one of the Methodist sort." It is good for you to be known. If you are what you should be, you will not mind being labelled, nor being tested either. It will help to keep you right when temptations arise; and it will frequently deliver you from trials of a more fascinating kind; for, suppose they forsake your company because you are a Christian, will not that be well? Those who leave you on that account are a very gainful loss. An honorable lady, now with God, when she joined this church told me how after her baptism many of her aristocratic friends had ceased to call upon her, or invite her to their houses. I congratulated her upon it, for it rendered it all the easier for her to select her own company. Her real worth of character and kindness of spirit soon won back all who were worth having, and the rest were happily removed. Such as shun you for following the Lord are persons whom you yourself might shun. We gain nothing by the love of those who love not God.

One good effect of being persecuted at home is this, it makes you gentler abroad. If, my brother Christian, you have those at home who make you unhappy, if you are a wise man you will be the better able to have patience with outsiders. Men wondered why Socrates was so patient with his pupils, and so good-tempered, but he ascribed it to having been hardened by the opposition of others, by being schooled at home by his shrewish wife, Xanthippe. Perhaps you will have the greater patience with those who scoff, and the greater sympathy with those who are scoffed at, from having had your share in the common lot of the saints. Thus to you as to Samson, out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of the strong cometh forth sweetness. This lion roars upon you, but the day shall come when you will find honey in it, and bless the name of the Lord.

III. My third point is, HOW SHOULD YOU BEHAVE UNDER THE TRIAL? May the Holy Spirit enable you to act very discreetly as well as decidedly. *Never court opposition.* God forbid we should do so. Some zealots seem bent on making religion objectionable. The cup we hold to a sinful world is in itself repugnant enough to fallen nature; there can be no wisdom in making it yet more objectionable by presenting it with a scowling face. It is as well when you have medicine to give to a child to show him a piece of sugar too: so let your kindness, and cheerfulness, and gentleness sweeten that which the world is not very likely to receive anyhow, but which it will the less resent if you present it with love, showing a desire to live peaceably with all men, and to consult the comfort of others rather than your own.

And then *endure whatever you have to endure with the greatest possible meekness.* There was a farmer whose wife was very irritated with him because of his attending a dissenting place of worship, and joining with Christian people. She often declared that she would not bear it much longer, but he was very patient, and made no harsh reply to her. One day she fetched him out of the harvest field, and said, "Now it is come to this; you will give up those people, or give me up"; and she brought out a web of cloth and said, "Now you take half of this and I'll take the other half; for I am going." He said, "No, my dear, you are welcome to it all. You have always been a very good industrious wife, take it all." Then she proposed taking a part of their household goods and settling everything for a final separation, but again he said, "Take all there is. If you will go away take everything you like, for I should not wish you to be uncomfortable; and come back again whenever you please, I shall always be glad to see you." Seeing that he talked in that way, she said, "Do you mean me to go?" "No," said he, "it is your own wish, not mine. I cannot give up my religion, but anything else I can do to make you stay and be happy, I will do." This was too much for her, she resolved to cease her opposition, and in a short time went with her husband to the place of worship, and became herself a believer. This is the surest way to victory. Yield everything but what it would be wrong to yield. Never grow angry. Keep cool, and let the railing be all on one side. There was a poor godly woman who used to attend the ministry of Mr. Robinson, of Leicester, and her husband, a very coarse brutal man, said to her one day in his wrath, "If you ever go to St. Mary's church again I'll cut both your legs off." He was a dreadful man, and equal to any violence, but on the next occasion of worship his wife went as aforesaid. As she came home, she commended herself to the care of God, expecting to be assailed. Her husband said to her, "Where have you been?" "I have been to St. Mary's church," said she. With that he felled her to the ground with a terrible blow on the face. Rising up, she gently said, "If you strike me on the other side I shall as freely forgive you as I do now." She had been a very passionate woman before conversion, and had been accustomed to give her husband as good as he could send, and therefore he was struck with her gentleness. "Where did you learn this patience?" said he. Her reply was, "By God's grace I learned it at St. Mary's." "Then you may go as often as you like." Presently *he* went also, and the war was over. There is nothing like meekness. It will conquer the strongest.

After bearing with meekness *return good for evil.* For creel words return warmer love and increased kindness. The most renowned weapon for a Christian to fight his antagonists with is that of overcoming evil with good. Evil to evil is beastlike, and no Christian will indulge in it; but good for evil is Christlike, and we must practice it. I think I have before told you the story of the husband who was a very loose, gay, depraved, man of the world, but he had a wife who for many years bore with his ridicule and unkindness, praying for him day and night, though no change came over him, except that he grew even more bold in sin. One night, being at a drunken feast with a number of

his boon companions, he boasted that his wife would do anything he wished, she was as submissive as a lamb. "Now," he said, "she has gone to bed hours ago; but if I take you all to my house at once she will get up and entertain you and make no complaint." "Not she," they said, and the matter ended in a bet, and away they went. It was in the small hours of the night, but in a few minutes she was up, and remarked that she was glad that she had two chickens ready, and if they would wait a little she would soon have a supper spread for them. They waited, and ere long, at that late hour, the table was spread, and she took her place at it as if it was quite an ordinary matter, acting the part of hostess with cheerfulness. One of the company, touched in his better feelings, exclaimed, "Madam, we ought to apologize to you for intruding upon you in this way, and at such an hour, but I am at a loss to understand how it is you receive us so cheerfully, for being a religious person you cannot approve of our conduct." Her reply was, "I and my husband were both formerly unconverted, but, by the grace of God, I am now a believer in the Lord Jesus. I have daily prayed for my husband, and I have done all I can to bring him to a better mind, but as I see no change in him, I fear he will be lost for ever; and I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can while he is here." They went away, and her husband said, "Do you really think I shall be unhappy for ever?" "I fear so," said she, "I would to God you would repent and seek forgiveness." That night patience accomplished her desire. He was soon found with her on the way to heaven. Yield on no point of principle, but in everything else be willing to bear reproach, and to be despised and mocked at for Christ's sake. *In hoc signo vinces*—by the cross patiently borne thou couquerest. "This is a hard saying," says one. I know it is, but grace can make the heaviest burden light, and transform duty into delight.

Here let one also remark that to this gentle endurance there must be added by the persecuted Christian *much exactness of life*. We must be very particular when such lynx-eyes are upon us, because if they can find us trespassing they will pounce upon us at once. If it is only a little wrong, a thing which they would not have noticed in anybody else, they will magnify it and raise quite a clamor about it. "Ah, that is your religion," say they, as if we claimed to be absolutely perfect. Be watchful, therefore, walk circumspectly, do not put yourself into their hands; let them have nothing to say against you save only upon the point of your religion. Nothing bathes opponent) like integrity, truthfulness, and holiness: they long to speak against you, but cannot find a fair opportunity. Take care that you daily pray for grace to keep your temper, for if you fail there they will boast of having conquered you, and will assail you again in the same way. Ask for grace to be patient, and say as little as you can, except to God. Pray much for them, for prayer is still heard, and how knowest thou, O believing woman, but thou mayst save thy unbelieving husband? Only watch on and pray on, and a blessing will come.

IV. In DOING ALL THIS WHAT COMFORT MAY YOU EXPECT? You may have this for your comfort, that *the persecutor is in God's hands*. He cannot do more than God lets him, and if God permits him to annoy, you may cheerfully bear it. Next, remember, if you keep your conscience clear it is a great joy. Conscience is a little bird that sings more sweetly than any lark or nightingale. Rough answers outside need not trouble you while within there is the answer of a good conscience towards God. Injure your conscience and you lose that consolation; preserve it from evil and you must be happy. Remember that by patiently enduring and persevering *you will have fellowship with the grandest spirits that ever lived*. You cannot be a martyr and wear the blood-red crown in these days, but you can at least suffer as far as you are called to do: grace enabling you, you may have

a share in the martyr's honors. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Remember, too, that if you have extraordinary troubles *Jesus will be doubly near to you*. This is the greatest comfort of all, for in all your afflictions he is afflicted. You will find his presence in the ordinances to be very delightful. Those stolen waters which he gives you in secret fellowship are very choice, those morsels which you get by stealth, how sweet they are! The old covenantors said they never worshipped God with so much joy as in the glens and among the hills when Claverhouse's dragoons were after them. The living is very refreshing to the Lord's hunted harts. His bosom is very soft and warm for those who are rejected of all men for his sake. He has a marvellous way of unveiling his face to those whose faces are covered with shame because of their love to him. Oh, be content, dear friends, to watch with your Lord.

You have the sweet thought also that *you are doing more good* where you are than if you were placed altogether among the godly. Yonder light, set up in mid ocean on the Eddystone rock, see how the storm sweeps around it, and the waters leap over it, threatening to put out its flame, but shall the light complain? Standing where it is, beaten by the Atlantic rollers, and braving the full fury of the storm, it is doing more good than if it were set up in Hyde Park for my lords and ladies to look at. The persecuted saint occupies a place where he warns and enlightens, and therefore suffers. He is like an advanced guard, to whom the place of danger is the place of honor: only let him ask for strength to bear and forbear, and he shall have glory at the last. Remember the rougher the road *the sweeter the rest*, and the greater the suffering the brighter the crown at the last. Those who have to bear most for Jesus will be those to whom he will most sweetly say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Ah, brethren, if you have a little rough language to put up with, what is it, compared with what many of the Lord's afflicted ones have to endure? I will tell you a little incident bearing upon that point, and then have done. Yesterday the postman brought me, amongst many others, a letter from Australia, which I prize more than any that have come to hand for a long while; it has touched my heart, and when you hear it you will not wonder. It is written at the desire of a man who is described by the gentleman who writes for him in the following terms: "I have known the writer for near eight years, during which time he has been quite helpless, being paralyzed, he has had one leg cut off, the sight has left his eye, he cannot move hand or feet; as he is placed on his bed so must he lie and endure the annoyance of flies, or anything that may molest him. So that I am sure you will be pleased to be the means of giving comfort to such an one, and yet he is mostly rejoicing; and few are more apt to teach and exhort those who come to see him, and direct them to suitable portions of God's word for their reading." Now this poor man, who has been helpless ever since the year 1858, or sixteen long years, writes me thus: "Being moved by the Holy Spirit I send you these few lines to thank you for the benefit I have received by reading your sermons. In the year 1850 I was brought to the knowledge of the truth, and found peace through believing in Jesus. In 1858 I met with a serious accident, so that I was not able to earn my bread, but trusting in the Lord he has led me in the right way. In 1866 it pleased him to confine me entirely to my bed. I bless his Holy Name that I can say I am bound by the cords of his love, that he has upheld and comforted me through all my long confinement, and enabled me to rejoice in hope of his glory; and the reading of your excellent sermons, which privilege I have enjoyed for some years, having been a source of great comfort and delight to my soul, causing me to soar on high and enjoy sweet communion, I am constrained by love to send you this acknowledgment, hoping that perhaps you may be cheered a

little by it in your arduous labors; and if our heavenly Father see fit, this my testimony to his faithfulness may be blessed by him to the comfort and encouragement of some afflicted ones in your flock, as I know that *all* these things work together for good to them that love God." Think of this unselfish sufferer having a letter written to comfort me. One would have thought he needed comforting himself, but the Lord so cheers him that, instead of asking for consolation, he does not mention in his letter that he has lost his leg, or that he is paralyzed, or has lost his sight. He only tells me of his joy and peace. Now, if children of God in such extremities can yet bear testimony to his faithfulness, are you going to run away because some foolish person or other sneers at you? Will you in cowardly fashion desert the standard because fools point their fingers at you? If so, are you made of the same stuff as the true saints? Have you the same backbone of divine grace as they? Assuredly not. May the Lord in his infinite mercy give you such a sound conversion that, whatever trial comes, you may still sing, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord and glory in the God of my salvation."

If I am addressing any one who has persecuted God's saints in any way, let me say, "Mind what you are at; there are many things a man will bear, but if you meddle with his children it will stir his soul, that is a tender point with all fathers." Nothing provokes the Lord like interfering with his children. Mind what you are at. And, oh, I pray the Lord, if you have done it ignorantly, really thinking them to be wrong, and only scoffing at them because you thought them hypocrites, may he that spake out of heaven to Saul, and said, "Why persecutest thou me?" let you see that you have really been wounding Jesus himself. May he make you see that those tears which you have forced from that faithful woman, and those sleepless nights which you have caused to that earnest man, were so much of evil done unto Christ, for which he will reckon with you at the last. Turn you unto the Lord Jesus, and may the Holy Spirit grant you to repent of this your wickedness, for Jesus is willing to receive and bless even you, as he did Paul of old. Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you also shall be saved. God bless you all, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 4.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—76, 670, 667.

The Turning Point

A Sermon

(No. 1189)

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, August 23rd, 1874, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And he arose, and came to his father.”—Luke 15:20.

THIS SENTENCE EXPRESSES the true turning point in the prodigal's life story. Many other matters led up to it, and before he came to it there was much in him that was very hopeful; but this was the point itself, and had he never reached it he would have remained a prodigal, but would never have been the prodigal restored, and his life would have been a warning rather than an instruction to us. “He arose, and came to his father.” Speaking, as I do, in extreme weakness, I have no words to spare; and while my voice holds out I shall speak straight to the point, and I pray the Lord to make every syllable practical and powerful by his Holy Spirit.

I. We shall begin by noticing that **HERE WAS ACTION**—“*He arose, and came to his father.*” He had already been in a state of thoughtfulness; he had come to himself, but now he was to go further, and come to his father. He had considered the past, and weighed it up, and seen the hollowness of all the world's pleasures; he had seen his condition in reference to his father, and his prospects if he remained in the far-off country; he had thought upon what he ought to do, and what would be the probable result of such a course; but now he passed beyond the dreaminess of thought into matter-of-fact acting and doing. How long will it be, dear hearers, before you will do the same? We are glad to have you thoughtful; we hope that a great point is gained when you are led to consider your ways, to ponder your condition, and to look earnestly into the future, for thoughtlessness is the ruin of many a traveler to eternity, and by its means the unwary fall into the deep pit of carnal security and perish therein. But some of you have been among the “thoughtful” quite long enough; it is time you passed into a more practical stage. It is high time that you came to action; it would have been better if you had acted already; for, in the matter of reconciliation to God, first thoughts are best. When a man's life hangs on a thread, and hell is just before him, his path is clear, and a second thought is superfluous. The first impulse to escape from danger and lay hold on Christ is that which you would be wise to follow. Some of you whom I now address have been thinking, and thinking, and thinking, till I fear that you will think yourselves into perdition. May you, by divine grace, be turned from thinking to believing, or else your thoughts will become the undying worm of your torment.

The prodigal had also passed beyond mere regret. He was deeply grieved that he had left his father's house, he lamented his lavish expenditure upon wantonness and rebelling, he mourned that the son of such a father should be degraded into a swineherd in a foreign land; but he now proceeded from regret to repentance, and bestirred himself to escape from the condition over which he mourned. What is the use of regret if we continue in sin? By all means pull up the sluices of your grief if the floods will turn the wheel of action, but you may as well reserve your tears, if they mean no more than idle sentimentalism. What avails it for a man to say he repents of his misconduct if he still perseveres in it? We are glad when sinners regret their sin and mourn the condition into which sin

has brought them, but if they go no further, their regrets will only prepare them for eternal remorse. Had the prodigal become inactive through despondency, or stolid through sullen grief, he must have perished, far away from his father's home, as it is to be feared many will whose sorrow for sin leads them into a proud unbelief and wilful despair of God's love; but he was wise, for he shook off the drowsiness of his despondency, and, with resolute determination, "arose and came to his father." Oh, when will you sad ones be wise enough to do the same? When will your thinking and your sorrowing give place to practical obedience to the gospel?

The prodigal also pressed beyond mere resolving. That is a sweet verse which says, "I will arise," but that is far better which says, "And he arose." Resolves are good, like blossoms, but actions are better, for they are the fruits. We are glad to hear from you the resolution, "I will turn to God," but holy angels in heaven do not rejoice over resolutions, they reserve their music for sinners who actually repent. Many of you like the son in the parable have said, "I go, sir," but you have not gone. You are as ready at forgetting as you are at resolving. Every earnest sermon, every death in your family, every funeral knell for a neighbor, every pricking of conscience, every touch of sickness, sets you a resolving to amend, but your promissory notes are never honored, your repentance ends in words. Your goodness is as the dew, which at early dawn hangs each blade of grass with gems, but leaves the fields all parched and dry when the sun's burning heat is poured upon the pasture. You mock your friends, and trifle with your own souls. You have often in this house said, "Let me reach my chamber and I will fall upon my knees," but on the way home you have forgotten what manner of men you were, and sin has confirmed its tottering throne. Have you not dallied long enough? Have you not lied unto God sufficiently? Should you not now give over resolving and proceed to the solemn business of your souls like men of common sense? You are in a sinking vessel, and the life-boat is near, but your mere resolve to enter it will not prevent your going down with the sinking craft; as sure as you are a living man, you will drown unless you take the actual leap for life.

"He arose and came to his father." Now, observe that *this action of the prodigal was immediate*, and without further parley. He did not go back to the citizen of that country and say, "Will you raise my wages? If not, I must leave." Had he parleyed he had been lost; but he gave his old master no notice, he concerned his indentures by running away. I would that sinners here would break their league with death, and violate their covenant with hell, by escaping for their lives to Jesus, who receives all such runaways. We want neither leave nor licence for quitting the service of sin and Satan, neither is it a subject which demands a month's consideration: in this matter instantaneous action is the surest wisdom. Lot did not stop to consult the king of Sodom as to whether he might quit his dominions, neither did he consult the parish officers as to the propriety of speedily deserting his home; but with the angel's hand pressing them, he and his fled from the city. Nay, one fled not; she looked and lingered, and that lingering cost her her life! That pillar of salt is the eloquent monitor to us to avoid delays when we are bidden to flee for our lives. Sinner, dost thou wish to be a pillar of salt? Wilt thou halt between two opinions, until God's anger shall doom thee to final impenitence? Wilt thou trifle with mercy till justice smite thee? Up, man, and while thy day of grace continues, fly thou into the arms of love.

The text implies that *the prodigal aroused himself*, and put forth all his energies. It is said, "he arose;" the word suggests that he had till then been asleep upon the bed of sloth, or the couch of presumption. If like Samson in Delilah's lap, he had been supine, inactive, and unstrung, but now, startled from his lethargy, he lifts up his eyes, he girds up his loins, he shakes off the spell which

had enthralled him, he puts forth every power, he arouses his whole nature, and he spares no exertion until he returns to his father.

Men are not saved between sleeping and waking. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Grace does not stupefy us, it but arouses us. Surely, sirs, it is worth while making an awful effort to escape from eternal wrath. It is worth while summoning up every faculty and power and emotion and passion of your being, and saying to yourself, "I cannot be lost; I will not be lost: I am resolved that I will find mercy through Jesus Christ." The worst of it is, O sinners, ye are so sluggish, so indifferent, so ready to let things happen as they may. Sin has bewitched and benumbed you. You sleep as on beds of down and forget that you are in danger of hell fire. You cry, "A little more rest, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the arms to sleep," and so you sleep on, though your damnation slumbereth not. Would to God you could be awakened. It is not in the power of my voice to arouse you; but may the Lord Himself alarm you, for never were men more in danger. Let but your breath fail, or your blood pause, and you are lost for ever. Frailer than a cobweb is that life on which your eternal destiny depends. If you were wise you would not give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you had found your God and been forgiven. Oh, when will you come to a real action? How long will it be ere you believe in Jesus? How long will you snort between the jaws of hell? How long dare you provoke the living God?

II. Secondly, *HERE WAS A SOUL COMING INTO ACTUAL CONTACT WITH GOD,—*"*He arose and came to his father.*" It would have been of no avail for him to have arisen if he had not come to his father. This is what the sinner has to do, and what the Spirit enables him to do: namely, to come straight away to his God. But, alas! very commonly, when men begin to be anxious, they go round about and hasten to a friend to tell him about it, or they even resort to a deceitful priest, and seek help from him. They fly to a saint or a virgin, and ask these to be mediators for them, instead of accepting the only Mediator Jesus Christ, and going to God at once by him. They fly to outward forms and ceremonies, or they turn to their Bibles, their prayers, their repentances, or their sermon-hearings; in fact, to anything rather than their God. But the prodigal knew better; he went to his father, and it will be a grand day for you, O sinner, when you do the same. Go straight away to your God in Christ Jesus. "Come here," says the priest. Pass that fellow by. Get away to your Father. Reject an angel from heaven if he would detain you from the Lord. Go personally, directly, and at once to God in Christ Jesus. But surely I must perform some ceremony first? Not so did the prodigal, he arose and went at once to his father. Sinner, you must come to God, and Jesus is the way. Go to him then, tell him you have done wrong, confess your sins to him, and yield yourself to him. Cry, "Father, I have sinned: forgive me, for Jesus' sake."

Alas! there are many anxious souls who do not go to others, but they look to themselves. They sit down and cry, "I want to repent; I want to feel my need; I want to be humble." O man, get up! What are you at? Leave yourself and go to your Father. "Oh, but I have so little hope; my faith is very weak, and I am full of fears." What matters your hopes or your fears while you are away from your Father? Your salvation does not lie within yourself, but in the Lord's good will to you. You will never be at peace till, leaving all your doubts and your hopes, you come to your God and rest in his bosom. "Oh, but I want to conquer my propensities to sin, I want to master my strong temptations." I know what it is you want. You want the best robe without your Father's giving it you, and shoes on your feet of your own procuring; you do not like going in a beggar's suit and receiving all from the Lord's loving hand; but this pride of yours must be given up, and you must

get away to God, or perish for ever. You must forget yourself, or only remember yourself so as to feel that you are bad throughout, and no more worthy to be called God's son. Give yourself up as a sinking vessel that is not worth pumping, but must be left to go down, and get you into the life-boat of free grace. Think of God your Father—of him, I say, and of his dear Son, the one Mediator and Redeemer of the sons of men. There is your hope—to fly away from self and to reach your Father.

Do I hear you say, "Well, I shall continue in the means of grace, and I hope there to find my God." I tell you, if you do that, and refuse to go to God, the means of grace will be the means of damnation to you. "I must wait at the pool," says one. Then I solemnly warn you that you will lie there and die; for Jesus does not command you to lie there, his bidding is, "Take up thy bed, and walk." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." You have to go unto your Father, and not to the pool of Bethesda, or any other pool of ordinances or means of grace. "But I mean to pray," says one. What would you pray for? Can you expect the Lord to hear you while you will not hear him? You will pray best with your head in your Father's bosom, but the prayers of an unyielding, disobedient, unbelieving heart are mockeries. Prayers themselves will ruin you if they are made a substitute for Doing at once to God. Suppose the prodigal had sat down at the swine trough and said, "I will pray here," what would it have availed him? or suppose he had wept there, what good would have come of it? Praying and weeping were good enough when he had come to his father, but they could not have been substituted for it. Sinner, your business is with God. Hasten to him at once. You have nothing to do with yourself, or your own doings, or what others can do for you, the turning point of salvation is, "he arose and came to his father." There must be a real, living, earnest, contact of your poor guilty soul with God, a recognition that there is a God, and that God can be spoken to, and an actual speech of your soul to him, through Jesus Christ, for it is only God in Christ Jesus that is accessible at all. Going thus to God, we tell him that we are all wrong, and walls to be set right; we tell him we wish to be reconciled to him, and are ashamed that we should have sinned against him; we then put our trust in his Son, and we are saved. O soul, go to God: it matters not though the prayer you come with may be a very broken prayer, or even if it has mistakes in it, as the prodigal's prayer had when he said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants;" the language of the prayer will not signify so long as you really approach to God. "Him that cometh to me," says Jesus, "I will in no wise cast out;" and Jesus ever liveth to make intercessions for them that come to God through him.

Here, then, is the great Protestant doctrine. The Romish doctrine says you must go round by the back door, and half-a-dozen of the Lord's servants must knock for you, and even then you may never be heard; but the grand old Protestant doctrine is, come to God yourself; come with no other mediator than Jesus Christ; come just as you are without merits and good works; trust in Jesus and your sins will be forgiven you.

There is my second point: there was action, and that action was contact with God.

III. Now, thirdly, IN THAT ACTION THERE WAS AN ENTIRE YIELDING UP OF HIMSELF. In the prodigal's case, his proud independence and self-will were gone. In other days he demanded his portion, and resolved to spend it as he pleased, but now he is willing to be as much under rule as a hired servant, he has had enough of being his own master, and is weary of the distance from God which self-will always creates. He longs to get into a child's true place, namely, that of dependence and loving submission. The great mischief of all was his distance from his father, and he now feels it to be so. His great thought is to remove that distance by humbly returning, for then he feels that all other ills will come to an end. He yields up his cherished freedom, his

boasted independence, his liberty to think and do and say whatever he chose, and he longs to come under loving rule and wise guidance. Sinner, are you ready for this? If so, come and welcome; your father longs to press you to his bosom!

He gave up all idea of self-justification, for he said, "I have *sinned*." Before he would have said, "I have a right to do as I like with my own; who is to dictate how I shall spend my own money. If I do sow a few wild oats, every young man does the same. I have been very generous, if nothing else, nobody can call me greedy. I am no hypocrite. Look at your canting Methodists, how they deceive people! There's nothing of that in me, I'll warrant you; I am an outspoken man of the world; and after all, a good deal better in disposition than my elder brother, fine fellow though he pretends to be." But now the prodigal boasts no longer. Not a syllable of self-praise falls from his lips; he mournfully confesses, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee." Sinner, if you would be saved you also must come down from your high places, and acknowledge your iniquity. Confess that you have done wrong, and do not try to extenuate your offense; do not offer apologies and make your case better than it is, but humbly plead guilty and leave your soul in Jesus' hands. Of two things, to sin or to deny the sin, probably to deny the sin is the worse of the two, and shows a blacker heart. Acknowledge your fault, man, and tell your heavenly Father that if it were not for his mercy you would have been in hell, and that as it is you richly deserve to be there even now. Make your case rather blacker than it is if you can, this I say because I know you cannot do any such thing. When a man is in the hospital it cannot be of any service to him to pretend to be better than he is; he will not receive any more medical attention on that account, but rather the other way, for the worse his case the more likely is the physician to give him special notice. Oh, sinner, lay bare before God thy sores, thy putrifying sores of sin, the horrid ulcers of thy deep depravity, and cry, "O Lord, have mercy upon me? "This is the way of wisdom. Have done with pride and self-righteousness, and make thy appeal to the undeserved pity of the Lord, and thou wilt speed.

Observe that the prodigal yielded up himself so thoroughly that he owned his father's love to him to be an aggravation of his guilt: so I take it he means when he says, "Father, I have sinned." It adds an emphasis to the "*I have sinned*" when it follows after the word "*father*." "Thou good God, I have broken thy good laws; thou loving, tender, merciful God, I have done wrong wantonly and wickedly against thee. Thou hast been a very loving Father to me, and I have been a most ungenerous and shameless traitor to thee, rebelling without cause. I confess this frankly and humbly, and with many tears. Ah! hadst thou been a tyrant I might have gathered some apology from thy severity, but thou hast been a Father, and this makes it worse that I should sin against thee." It is sweet to hear such a confession as this poured out into the Father's bosom.

The penitent also yielded up all his supposed rights and claims upon his father, saying, "I am not worthy to be called thy son." He might have said, "I have sinned, but still I am thy child," and most of us would have thought it a very justifiable argument; but he does not say so, he is too humble for that, he owns, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." A sinner is really broken down when he acknowledges that if God would have no mercy on him, but cast him away for ever, it would be no more than justice.

"Should saddled vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce thee just in death;
And, if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

That soul is not far from peace which has ceased arguing and submits to the sentence. Oh, sinner, I urge thee, if thou wouldst find speedy rest, go and throw thyself at the foot of the cross where God meets such as thou art, and say, "Lord, here I am; do what thou wilt with me. Never a word of excuse will I offer, nor one single plea by way of extenuation. I am a mass of guilt and misery, but pity me, oh, pity me! No rights or claims have I; I have forfeited the rights of creatureship by becoming a rebel against thee. I am lost and utterly undone before the bar of thy justice. From that justice I flee and hide myself in the wounds of thy Son. According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions!"

Once again, here was such a yielding up of himself to his father that no terms or conditions are mentioned or implied. He begs to be received, but a servant's place is good enough for him; amongst the scullions of the kitchen he is content to take his place, so long as he may be forgiven. He does not ask for a little liberty to sin, or stipulate for a little self-righteousness wherein he may boast; he gives all up. He is willing to be anything or nothing, just as his father pleases, so that he may but be numbered with his household. No weapons of rebellion are in his hands now. No secret opposition to his father's rule lingers in his soul, he is completely subdued, and lies at his father's feet. Our Lord never crushed a soul yet that lay prostrate at his feet, and he never will. He will stoop down and say, "Rise, my child; rise, for I have forgiven thee. Go and sin no more. I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

IV. Notice further, and fourthly, that **IN THIS ACT THERE WAS A MEASURE OF FAITH IN HIS FATHER**—a measure, I say, meaning thereby not much faith, but some. A little faith saves the soul. There was faith in his father's power. He said, "In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare." Sinner, dost thou not believe that God is able to save thee; that through Jesus Christ he is able to supply thy soul's needs. Canst thou not get as far as this, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." The prodigal had also some faith in his father's readiness to pardon; for if he had not so hoped he would never have returned to his father at all: if he had been sure that his father would never smile upon him he would never have returned to him. Sinner, do believe that God is merciful, for so he is. Believe, through Jesus Christ, that he willeth not the death of the sinner, but had rather that he should turn to him and live; for as surely as God this is truth, and do not thou believe a lie concerning thy God. The Lord is not hard or harsh, but he rejoices to pardon great transgressions. The prodigal also believed in his father's readiness to bless him. He felt sure that his father would go as far as propriety would permit, for he said, "I am not worthy to be called thy son, but make me at least thy servant." In this also he admitted that his father was so good, that even to be his servant would be a great matter. He was contented even to get the lowest place, so long as he might be under the shade of so good a protector.

Ah, poor sinner, dost thou not believe that God will have mercy on thee if he can do so consistently with his justice? If thou believest that, I have good news to tell thee. Jesus Christ, his Son, has offered such an atonement, that God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth, he has mercy upon the vilest, and justifieth the ungodly, and accepteth the very chief of sinners through his dear Son. Oh, soul, have faith in the atonement. The atonement made by the personal sacrifice of the Son of God must be infinitely precious; believe thou that there is efficacy enough in it for thee. It is thy safety to fly to that atonement and cling to the Cross of Christ, and thou wilt honor God by so doing; is the only way in which thou canst honor him. Thou canst honor him by

believing that he can save thee, even thee. The truest faith is that which believes in the mercy of God in the teeth of conscious unworthiness. The penitent in the parable went to his father too unworthy to be called his son, and yet he said, "My father." Faith has a way of seeing the blackness of sin, and yet believing that God can make the soul as white as snow. It is not faith that says, "I am a little sinner, and therefore God can forgive me;" but that is faith which cries, "I am a great sinner, an accursed and condemned sinner, and yet, for all that, God's infinite mercy can forgive me, and the blood of Christ can make me clean." Believe in the teeth of thy feelings, and in spite of thy conscience; believe in God, though everything within thee seems to say, "He cannot save thee; he will not save thee." Believe in God, sinner, over the tops of mountain sins. Do as John Bunyan says he did, for he was so afraid of his sins and of the punishment thereof, that he could not but run into God's arms, and he said, "Though he had held a drawn sword in his hands, I would have run on the very point of it, rather than have kept away from him." So do thou, poor sinner. Believe thy God. Believe in nothing else, but trust thy God, and thou wilt get the blessing. It is wonderful the power of faith over God, it binds his justice and constrains his grace. I do not know how to illustrate it better than by a little story. When I walked down my garden some time ago I found a dog amusing himself among the flowers. I knew that he was not a good gardener, and no dog of mine, so I threw a stick at him and bade him begone. After I had done so, he conquered me, and made me ashamed of having spoken roughly to him, for he picked up my stick, and, wagging his tail right pleasantly, he brought the stick to me, and dropped it at my feet. Do you think I could strike him or drive him away after that? No, I patted him and called him good names. The dog had conquered the man. And if you, poor sinner, dog as you are, can have confidence enough in God to come to him just as you are, it is not in his heart to spurn you. There is an omnipotence in simple faith which will conquer even the divine Being himself. Only do but trust him as he reveals himself in Jesus, and you shall find salvation.

V. I have not time or strength to dwell longer here, and so I must notice, fifthly, that **THIS ACT OF COMING INTO CONTACT WITH GOD IS PERFORMED BY THE SINNER JUST AS HE IS.** I do not know how wretched the prodigal's appearance may have been, but I will be bound to say he had grown none the sweeter by having fed swine, nor do I suppose his garments had been very sumptuously embroidered by gathering husks for them from the trees. Yet, just as he was, he came. Surely he might have spent an hour profitably in cleansing his flesh and his clothes. But no, he said, "I will arise," and no sooner said than done! he did arise, and he came to his father. Every moment that a sinner stops away from God in order to get better he is but adding to his sin, for the radical sin of all is his being away from God and the longer he stays in it the more he sins. The attempt to perform good works apart from God is like the effort of a thief to set his stolen goods in order, his sole duty is to return them at once. The very same pride which leads men away from God may be seen in their self-conceited notion that they can improve themselves while still they refuse to return to him. The essence of their fault is that they are far off from God, and whatever they do, so long as that distance remains, nothing is effectually done. I say the radical of the whole matter is distance from God, and therefore the commencement of setting matters right lies in arising and returning to him from whom they have departed.

The prodigal was bound to go home just as he was, for there was nothing that he could do. He was reduced to such extremities that he could not purchase a fresh piece of cloth to mend his garments, nor a farthing's worth of soap with which to cleanse his flesh; and it is a great mercy when a man is so spiritually reduced that he cannot do anything but go to his God as a beggar, when

he is so bankrupt that he cannot pay a farthing in the pound, when he is so lost that he cannot even repent or believe apart from God, but feels that he is for ever undone unless the Lord shall interpose. It is our wisdom to go to God for everything.

Moreover, there was nothing needed from the prodigal but to return to his father. When a child who has done wrong comes back, the more its face is blurred with tears the better. When a beggar ask for charity, the more his clothes are in rags the better. Are not ram and sores the very livery of beggars? I once gave a man a pair of shoes because he said he was in need of them; but after he had put them on and gone a little way I overtook him in a gateway taking them off in order to go barefooted again. I think they were patent leather, and what should a beggar do in such attire? He was changing them for "old shoes and clouted," those were suitable to his business. A sinner is never so well arrayed for pleading as when he comes in rags. At his worst, the sinner, for making an appeal to mercy, is at his best. And so, sinners, there is no need for you to linger; come just as you are. "But must we not wait for the Holy Spirit?" "Ah, beloved, he who is willing to arise and go to his Father has the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who moves us to return to God, and it is spirit of the flesh or of the devil that would bid us wait.

How now, sinners? Some of you are sitting in those pews, where are you? I cannot find you out, but my Master can, he has made this sermon on purpose for you. "Well, but I would like to get home and pray." Pray where you are, in the pew. "But I cannot speak out aloud." You may if you like, I won't stop you. "But I should not like." Well, don't, then. God can hear you without a sound, though I wish sometimes we did hear people cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" "I would gladly hear the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But if men cannot hear you, the Lord can hear the cries of their hearts. Now, just sit still a minute, and say, "My God I must come to thee. Thou art in Jesus Christ, and in him thou has already come a great way to meet me. My soul wants thee; take me now and make me what I ought to be. Forgive me, and accept me." It is the turning-point of a man's life when that is done, wherever it is, whether in a workshop, or in a saw-pit, in a church, or in a tabernacle; it does not matter where. There is the point—the getting to God in Christ, giving all up, and by faith resting in the mercy of God.

VI. The last point of all is this—**THAT ACT WROUGHT THE GREATEST CONCEIVABLE CHANGE IN THE MAN.** He was a new man after that. Harlots, winebibbers, you have lost your old companion now! He has gone to his leather, and his Father's company and yours will never agree. A man's return to his God means his leaving the chambers of vice and the tables of riot. You may depend upon it whenever you hear of a professing Christian living in uncleanness, he has not been living anywhere near his God. He may have talked a great deal about it, but God and unchastity never agree; if you have friendship with God you will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Now, too, the penitent has done with all degrading works to support himself. You will not find him feeding swine any more, or making a swine of himself either by trusting in priests or sacraments. He will not confess to a priest again, or pay a penny to get his mother out of purgatory; he is not such a fool as that any more. He has been to his God on his own account, and he does not want any of these shavelings to go to God for him. He has got away from that bondage. No more pig-feeding; no more superstition for him! "Why," says he, "I have access with boldness to the mercy-seat, and what have I to do with the priests of Rome?"

There is a change in him in all ways. Now he has come to his father his pride is broken down. He no longer glories in that which he calls his own; all his glory is in his father's free pardoning

love. He never boasts of what he has, for he owns that he has nothing but what his father gives him; and though he is far better off than ever he was in his spendthrift days, yet he is as unassuming as a little child. He is a gentleman-commoner upon the bounty of his God, and lives from day to day by a royal grant from the table of the King of kings. Pride is gone, but content fills its room. He would have been contented to be one of the servants of the house, much more satisfied is he to be a child. He loves his father with a new love; he cannot even mention his name without saying, "And he forgave me, he forgave me freely, he forgave me all, and he said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet." From the day of his restoration the prodigal is bound to his Father's home, and reckons it to be one of his greatest blessings that it is written in the covenant of grace, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

This morning I believe that God in his mercy means to call many sinners to himself. I am often very much surprised to find how the Lord guides my word according to the persons before me. Last Sunday there came here a young son of a gentleman, a foreigner, from a distant land, under considerable impressions as to the truth of the Christian religion. His father is a follower of one of the ancient religions of the East, and this young gentleman naturally felt it a great difficulty that he would probably make his father angry if he became a Christian. Judge, then, how closely the message of last Sabbath came home to him, when the text was, "What if thy father answer thee roughly? "He came to tell me that he thanked God for that message, and he hoped to bear up under the trial, should persecution arise. I feel that I am with equal plainness speaking to some of you. I know I am. You are saying, "May I now go to God joist as I am, and through Jesus Christ yield myself up; and will he forgive me? "Dear brother, or dear sister, wherever you may be, *try it*. That is the best thing to do; *try it*; and, if the angels do not set the bells in heaven ringing, God has altered from what he was last week, for I know he received poor sinners then, and he will receive them now. The worst thing I dread about you is, lest you should say, "I will think of it." *Don't* think of it. *Do it!* Concerning this no more thinking is needed; but to do it. Get away to God. Is it not according to nature that the creature should be at peace with its Creator? Is it not according to your conscience? Is there not something within you which cries, "Go to God in Christ Jesus." In the case of that poor prodigal, the famine said to him, "Go home!" Bread was dear, meat was scarce, he was hungry, and every pang of want said, "Go home! Go home!" When he went to his old friend the citizen, and he asked him for help, his scowling looks said, "Why don't you go home?" There is a time with sinners when even their old companions seem to say, "We do not want you. You are too miserable and melancholy. Why don't you go home?" They sent him to feed swine, and the very hogs grunted, "Go home?" When he picked up those carob husks and tried to eat them, they crackled, "Go home." He looked upon his rags, and they gaped at him, "*Go home.*" His hungry belly and his faintness cried "*Go home.*" Then he thought of his father's face, and how kindly it had looked at him, and it seemed to say, "Come home!" He remembered the bread enough and to spare, and every morsel seemed to say, "Come home! "He pictured the servants sitting down to dinner and feasting to the full, and every one of them seemed to look right away over the wilderness to him and to say, "Come home! Thy father feeds us well. Come home! "Everything said, "Come home! "Only the devil whispered, "Never go back. Fight it out! Better starve than yield! Die game! "But then he had got away from the devil this once, for he had come to himself, and he said, "No; I will arise and go to my father." Oh that you would be equally wise. Sinner, what is the use of being damned for the sake of a little pride. Yield thee, man! Down with thy pride! You will not find it so

hard to submit if you remember that dear Father who loved us and gave himself for us in the person of his own dear Son. You will find it sweet to yield to such a friend. And when you get your head in his bosom, and feel his warm kisses on your cheek, you will soon feel that it is sweet to weep for sin—sweet to confess your wrong doing, and sweeter still to hear him say, “I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thy transgressions.” “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

God Almighty grant this may be the case with hundreds of you this morning. He shall have all the glory of it, but my heart shall be very glad, for I feel nothing of the spirit of the elder brother within me, but the greatest conceivable joy at the thought of making merry with you by-and-by, when you come to own my Lord and Master, and we sit together at the sacramental feast, rejoicing in his love. God bless you, for his sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 15.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—136 (Song I.), 614, 612.

A Song Among the Lilies

A Sermon

(No. 1190)

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, August 30th, 1874, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.”—Song of Solomon 2:16.

LAST SABBATH, in our morning's sermon, we began at the beginning and described the turning point in which the sinner sets his face towards his God, and for the first time gives practical evidence of spiritual life in his soul. He bestirs himself, he goes to his Father's house, and speedily is pressed to his Father's bosom, forgiven, accepted, and rejoiced over. This morning we are going far beyond that stage, to a position which I may call the very crown and summit of the spiritual life. We would conduct you from the door-step to the innermost chamber, from the outer court to the Holy of Holies, and we pray the Holy Spirit to enable each one of us who have entered in by Christ Jesus, the door, to pass boldly into the secret place of the tabernacles of the Host High, and sing with joyful heart the words of our text, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.”

“For he is mine and I am his,
The God whom I adore;
My Father, Savior, Comforter,
Now and for evermore.”

The passage describes a high state of grace, and it is worthy of note that the description is full of Christ. This is instructive, for this is not an exceptional case, it is only one fulfillment of a general rule. Our estimate of Christ is the best gauge of our spiritual condition; as the thermometer rises in proportion to the increased warmth of the air, so does our estimate of Jesus rise as our spiritual life increases in vigor and fervency. Tell me what you think of Jesus and I will tell you what to think of yourself. Christ us, yea, more than all when we are thoroughly sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost. When pride of self fills up the soul, there is little room for Jesus; but when Jesus is fully loved, self is subdued, and sin driven out of the throne. If we think little of the Lord Jesus we have very great cause to account ourselves spiritually blind, and naked, and poor, and miserable. The rebel despises his lawful sovereign, but the favored courtier is enthusiastic in his praise. Christ crucified is the revealer of many hearts, the touchstone by which the pure gold and the counterfeit metal are discerned; his very name is as a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap; false professors cannot endure it, but true believers triumph therein. We are growing in grace when we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let everything else be gone, and let Christ fill up the entire space of our soul, then, and only then, are we rising out of the vanity of the flesh into the real life of God.

Beloved, the grandest facts in all the world to a truly spiritual man are not the rise and fall of empires, the marches of victory, or the desolations of defeat; he cares neither for crowns nor mitres, swords nor shields; his admiring gaze is wholly fixed upon Christ and his cross and cause. To him Jesus is the center of history, the soul and core of providence. He desires no knowledge so much as that which concerns his Redeemer and Lord; his science deals with what Jesus is and what he

is to be, what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do. The believer is mainly anxious as to how Jesus can be glorified, and how sinners can be brought to know him. That which concerns the honor of Jesus is our chief concern from day to day; as for other matters let the Lord do as he wills with them, only let Jesus Christ be magnified, and all the rest of the world's story has small significance for us. The Beloved is the head and front, the heart and soul of the Christian's delight when his heart is in its best state. Our text is the portrait of a heavenly-minded child of God, or rather, it is the music of his well stringed harp when love as minstrel touches the tenderest chords: "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies."

We shall note then, first, that here is *a delighting to have Christ*; secondly, *a delighting to belong to Christ*; and thirdly, *a delighting at the very thought of Christ*.

I. First, here is A DELIGHTED TO HAVE CHRIST. "*My beloved is mine.*" The spouse makes this the first of her joy notes, the cornerstone of her peace, the fountain of her bliss, the crown of her glory. Observe here that where such an expression is truthfully used the existence of *the Beloved is matter of fact*. Scepticism, and questioning have no place with those who thus sing. There are dreamers now-adays who cast doubt on everything; taking to themselves the name of philosophers, and professing to know something of science, they make statements worthy only of idiots, and demand for their self-evidently false assertions the assent of rational men. The word "philosopher" will soon come to mean a lover of ignorance, and the term "a scientific man" will be understood as meaning a fool, who has said in his heart there is no God. Such attacks upon the eternal verities of our holy faith can have no effect upon hearts enamoured of the Son of God, for, dwelling in his immediate presence, they have passed the stage of doubt, left the region of questioning far behind, and in this matter have entered into rest. The power of love has convinced us; to entertain a doubt as to the reality and glory of our Well-beloved would be torment to us, and therefore love has cast it out. We use no perhapses, buts, or ifs concerning our Beloved, but we say positively that he is, and that he is ours. We believe that we have better evidence of his being, power, Godhead, and love to us than can be given for any other fact. So far from being abashed by the cavils of sceptics, or quailing beneath the question, "Is there such a Beloved?" we are not careful to answer in this matter, for we know that there is; our love laughs at the question, and does not condescend to answer it save by bidding those who seriously inquire to "come and see" for themselves. We have ever found, beloved, that when a time of chilling doubt has come over us—and such ague fits will come—we have only to return to meditations upon Jesus and he becomes his own evidence by making our hearts burn within us with love of his character and person, and then doubt is doomed. We do not slay our unbelief by reason, but we annihilate it by affection. The influence of love to Jesus upon the soul is so magical—I wish I had a better word—so elevating, so ravishing, so transporting, it gives such a peace, and withal inspires such holy and lofty aspirations, that the effect proves the cause. That which is holy is true, and that which is true cannot rise out of that which is false. We may safely judge a tree by its fruit, and a doctrine by its result: that which produces in us self-denial, purity, righteousness, and truth, cannot itself be false, and yet the love of Jesus does this beyond everything else. There must be truth for a cause where truth is the effect; and thus love, by the savor which it spreads over the soul by contemplation of Christ, puts its foot upon the neck of doubt and triumphantly utters bold, confident declarations, which reveal the full assurance of faith. New-born love to Jesus, while yet in its cradle, like a young Hercules, takes the serpents of doubt and strangles them. He who can say from his heart "My Beloved," is the man who is in the way to confirmed faith. Love cannot, will not doubt; it casts away the crutches of argument and

flies on the wings of conscious enjoyment, singing her nuptial hymn, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his."

In the case before us *the love of the heavenly-minded one is perceived and acknowledged by herself*. "My beloved," saith she; it is no latent affection, she knows that she loves him, and solemnly avows it. She does not whisper, "I hope I love the peerless one," but she sings, "My beloved." There is no doubt in her soul about her passion for the altogether lovely one. Ah, dear friends, when you feel the flame of love within your soul, and give it practical expression, you will no longer inquire, "Do I love the Lord or no?" "Then your inner consciousness will dispense with evidences. Those are dark days when we require evidences; well may we then fast, for the Bridegroom is not with us; but when he abides with us, enjoyment of his fellowship supersedes all evidences. I want no evidence to prove that food is sweet when it is still in my month; I want no evidence of the existence of the sun when I am basking in his beams, and enjoying his light, and even so we need no evidence that Jesus is precious to us when, like a bundle of myrrh, he perfumes our bosom. We are anxious doubters as to our safety, and questioners of our own condition, because we are not living with Jesus as we ought to be; but when he brings us to his banqueting house, and we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with him and with the Father, and then we believe and are sure, and our love to Jesus is indisputable, because it burns within too fervently to be denied. Why, when a Christian is in a right state, his love to Jesus is the mightiest force in his nature, it is an affection which, like Aaron's rod, swallows up all other rods; it is the mainspring of his action, and sways his whole body, soul, and spirit. As the wind sweeps over all the strings of the Alolian harp, and causes them all to vibrate, so does the love of Jesus move every power and passion of our soul, and we feel in our entire being that our Beloved is indeed ours, and that we love him with all our hearts. Here, then, is the Beloved realized, and our love realised too.

But the pith of the text lies here, *our possession of him is proven*, we know it, and we know it on good evidence—"My beloved *is mine*." You know it is not a very easy thing to reach this point. Have you ever thought of the fact that to claim the Lord and call him "my God," is a very wonderful thing? Who was the first man in the Old Testament who is recorded as saying "My God"? Was it not Jacob, when he slept at Bethel, and saw the ladder which reached to heaven? Even after that heavenly vision it took him touch effort to reach to "My God." He said "If God will be with me and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put On, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." Only after long experience of divine goodness could he climb up to the height of saying "My God." And who is the first man in the New Testament that calls Jesus "My Lord and My God"? It was Thomas, and he must needs have abundant proofs before he can speak thus: "Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Only when he had received such proofs could he exclaim "My Lord and my God." Blessed are they who reach it by simpler faith, who have not seen and yet have believed. "My Beloved" is a strong expression. "Beloved" is sweet, but "MY Beloved" is sweetest of all. If you think of it, it is no little thing to claim God as ours, to claim Jesus the Beloved as ours, yea, to put it in the singular, and call him *mine*; and yet, when the believer's heart is in the right condition, he makes the claim, and is warranted in so doing; for Jesus Christ is the portion of all believers. His Father gave him to us, and he has given himself to us. Jesus was made over to every believing soul, as his personal possession, in the eternal covenant ordered in all things and sure; Jesus actually gave himself for us in his incarnation, becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; he has made

himself ours by his passion and death, loving us and giving himself for us, to save us from our sins; he has also given us power to appropriate him by the gracious gift of faith, by which we are in very deed married to him, and are enabled to call him the husband of our souls, who is ours to have and to hold, for better for worse, for life and for death, by a bond of marriage union which neither death nor hell, time nor eternity, can break. Jesus is ours by the promise, the covenant, and oath of God; a thousand assurances and pledges, bonds and seals, secure him to us as our portion and everlasting heritage.

This precious possession becomes to the believer his sole treasure. “My beloved is mine,” saith he, and in that sentence he has summed up all his wealth. He does not say “My wife, my children, my home, my earthly comforts are mine.” He is almost afraid to say so, because while he is yet speaking, they may cease to be his: the beloved wife may sicken before his eyes, the child may need a tiny coffin, the friend may prove a traitor, and the riches may take to themselves wings, therefore the wise man does not care to say too positively that anything here below is his; indexed, he feels that in very truth they are not his, but only lent to him “to be returned anon”; but the Beloved is his own, and his possession of him is most firm. Neither doth the believer when his soul is in the best state so much rejoice even in his spiritual privileges as in the Lord from whom they come. He has righteousness, wisdom, sanctification and redemption; he has both grace and glory secured to him, but he prefers rather to claim the fountain than the streams. He clearly sees that these choice mercies are only his because they are Christ’s, and only his because Christ is his. Oh, what would all the treasures of the covenant be to us if it were possible to have them without Christ? Their very sap and sweetness would be gone. Having our Beloved to be ours, we have all things in him, and therefore our main treasure, yea, our sole treasure, is our Beloved. O ye saints of God, was there ever possession like this? You have your beloveds, ye daughters of earth, but what are your beloveds compared with ours? He is the Son of God and the Son of Man! The darling of heaven and the delight of earth! The lily of the valley and the rose of Sharon! Perfect in his character, powerful in his atoning death, mighty in his living plea! He is such a lover that all earthly loves put together are not worthy to touch the hem of his garment, or loose the latchet of his shoes. He is so dear, so precious, that words cannot describe him nor pencil depict him, but this we will say of him, he is “the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely,” and he is ours. Do you wonder that we glory in this fact, and count this the crowning delight of our lives, “My beloved is mine”?

The very tenure upon which we hold this priceless possession is a matter to glory in. O worldlings, you cannot hold your treasures as we hold ours. If you knew all, you would never say of anything, “It is mine,” for your holding is too precarious to constitute possession. It is yours till that frail thread of life shall snap, or that bubble of time shall burst. You have only a leasehold of your treasures, terminable at the end of one frail life; whereas ours is an eternal freehold, an everlasting entail. “My beloved is mine,”—I cannot lose him, nor can he be taken from me; he is mine for ever, for “who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? “So that, while the possession is rare, the tenure is rare also, and it the life of our life, and the light of our delight that we can sing—

“Yea, thou art mine, my blessed Lord,
 O my Beloved, thou art mine!
 And, purchased with thy precious blood,
 My God and Savior, I am thine.
 “MY CHRIST! Oh, sing it in the heavens,

Let every angel lift his voice;
 Sound with ten thousand harps his praise,
 With me, ye heavenly hosts, rejoice.
 "The gift unspeakable is given,
 The grace of God has made him mine;
 And, now, before both earth and heaven,
 Lord, I will own that I am thine."

Now, beloved friends, I cannot talk about this as I feel, I can only give you hints of that which fills me to the full with joy. I beg you to contemplate for a single moment the delight which is stored up in this fact, that the blessed Son of God, the "brightness of the Father's glory," is all our own. Whatever else we may have, or may not have, he is ours. I may not exhibit in my character all the grace I could wish, but "My beloved is mine"; I may have only one talent, but "My beloved is mine"; I may be very poor and very obscure, but "My beloved is mine"; I may have neither health nor wealth, but "My beloved is mine"; I may not be what I want to be, but "My beloved is mine." Yea, he is altogether mine, his Godhead and his manhood, his life, his death, his attributes, and prerogatives, yea, all he is, all he was, all he ever will be, all he has done, and all he ever will do, is mine. I possess not a portion in Christ, but the whole of him. All his saints own him, but I own him as much as if there were never another saint to claim him. Child of God, do you see this? In other inheritances, if there are many heirs, there is so much the less for each, but in this great possession every one who has Christ has a whole Christ all to himself, from the head of much fine gold, down to his legs, which are as pillars of marble. The whole of his boundless heart of love, his whole arm of infinite might, and his whole head of matchless wisdom,—all is for thee, beloved. Whoever thou mayst be, if thou dost indeed trust in Jesus, he is all thine own.

My beloved is all mine, and absolutely mine; not mine to look at and talk about merely, but mine to trust in, to speak to, to depend upon, to fly to in every troublous hour, yea, mine to feed upon, for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. Our beloved is not ours only to use in certain ways, but ours outright, without restriction. I may draw what I will from him, and both what I take and what I leave are mine. He himself in his ever glorious person is mine, and mine always; mine when I know it, and mine when I do not know it, mine when I am sure of it, and mine when I doubt it; mine by day, and mine by night; mine when I walk in holiness, ay, and mine when I sin, for "if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He is mine on the hill Mizar, and mine in the swellings of Jordan; mine by the grave where I bury those I love, mine when I shall be buried there myself, mine when I rise again; mine in judgment, and mine in glory; for ever mine.

Note well that it is written, "My beloved is *mine*," in the singular. He is yours, I am glad of it; but still to me it is most sweet that he is mine. It is well to bless God that others have a possession in Christ, but what would that avail if we were strangers to him ourselves? The marrow and the fatness lie in the personal pronoun singular, "My beloved is *mine*." "I am so glad that Jesus loves *me*." Oh for a blessed grip with both hands on such a Christ as this! Observe well that he is ours *as our Beloved*, so that he is ours as whatever our love makes of him. Our love can never praise him enough, or speak well enough of him, she thinks all descriptions fall short of his deservings; well, then, Jesus is ours at his best; if we think him so glorious, he is ours in all that glory. Our love says that he is a fair, lovely, sweet, and precious Christ, and let us be sure that, however lovely, sweet, and precious he is, he is all ours. Our love says there is none like him, he is King of kings

and Lord of lords, he is the ever blessed; well, as the King of kings and Lord of lords he is yours. You cannot think too much of him, but when you think your best he is yours at that best. He has not a glory so high that it is not yours, nor a lustre so brilliant that it is not yours. He is my beloved, and I would fain extol him, but never can I get beyond this golden circle, when I most extol him he is still mine.

Here, then, is the basis of Christian life, the foundation on which it rests: to know that most surely Christ is altogether ours is the beginning of wisdom, the source of strength, the star of hope, the dawn of heaven.

II. The second portion of the text deals with DELIGHTING TO BELONG TO CHRIST. "*I am his.*" This is as sweet as the former sentence. I would venture to put a question to each loving wife here present—when you were married which was the sweetest thought to you, that you were your husband's, or that he was yours? Why, you feel that neither sentence would be sweet alone: they are necessary to each other. Ask any fond, loving heart which of these declarations could best be parted with, and they will tell you that neither can be given us. Christ is mine, but if I were not his it would be a sorry case, and if I were his and he were not mine it would be a wretched business. These two things are joined together with diamond rivets—"My beloved is mine, and I am his." Put the two together, and you have reached the summit of delight.

That we are his is a fact that may be prove—yea, it should need no proving, but be manifest to all that "*I am his.*" Certainly we are his by creation: he who made us should have us. We are his because his Father gave us to him, and we are his because he chose us. Creation, donation, election are his triple hold upon us. We are his because he bought us with his blood, his because he called us by his grace, his because he is married to us, and we are his spouse. We are his, moreover, to our own consciousness, because we have heartily, from the inmost depths of our being, given ourselves up to him, bound by love to him for ever. We feel we must have Christ, and be Christ's, or die—"For me to live is Christ." Brethren and sisters, mind you attend to this clause, I am sure you will if the former one is true to you. If you can say, "My beloved is mine," you will be sure to add, "I am his, I must be his, I will be his: I live not unless I am his, for I count that wherein I am not his I am dead, and I only live wherein I live to him." My very soul is conscious that I am his.

Now *this puts very great honor upon us.* I have known the time when I could say "My beloved is mine" in a very humble trembling manner, but I did not dare to add "I am his" because I did not think I was worth his having. I dared not hope that "I am his" would ever be written in the same book side by side with "My beloved is mine." Poor sinner, first lay hold on Jesus, and then you will discover that Jesus values you. You will prize him first, and then you will find out that he prizes you, and that though you do not feel worthy to be flung on a dunghill, yet Jesus has put a value upon you, saying "Since thou wert precious in my sight thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee." It is no small joy to know that we poor sinners are worth Christ's having, and that he has even said, "They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels."

This second part of the text is true as *absolutely* as the first. "*I am his*"—not my goods only, nor my time, nor my talents, nor what I can spare, but "*I am his.*" I fear that some Christians have never understood this. They give the Lord a little of their surplus, which they never miss. The poor widow who gave all her living, had the true idea of her relation to her Lord. She would have put herself into the treasury if she could, for she felt "*I am his.*" As for myself, I wish I could be dropped bodily through the little slit of Christ's treasure box, and be in his casket for ever, never to be heard of any more as my own, but to be wholly my Lord's. Paul desired to spend and be spent. It is not

easy to do those two things distinctly with money, for when you spend a thing it is spent at one and the same time, but the apostle meant that he would spend himself by activity, and then when he could do no more, he would be glad to be spent by passive endurance for Christ's sake. The believer feels that he belongs to Jesus absolutely; let the Lord employ him as he may, or try him as he pleases; let him take away all earthly friends from him or surround him with comforts; let him either depress him or exalt him, let him use him for little things or great things, or not use him at all, but lay him on the shelf; it is enough that the Lord does it, and the true heart is content, for it truthfully confesses, "I am his. I have no mortgage or lien upon myself, so that I can call a part of my being my own, but I am absolutely and unreservedly my Lord's sole property." Do you feel this, brethren and sisters? I pray God you may.

Blessed be God, this is true *evermore*—"I am his," his to-day, in the house of worship, and his to-morrow in the house of business; his as a singer in the sanctuary, and his as a toiler in the workshop; his when I am preaching, and equally his when I am walking the streets; his while I live, his when I die; his when my soul ascends and my body lies mouldering in the grave; the whole personality of my manhood is altogether his for ever and for ever.

This belonging to the Well-beloved is a matter of fact and practice, not a thing to be talked about only, but really to be acted on. I am treading on tender ground now, but I would to God that every Christian could really say this without lying: "I do live unto Christ in all things, for I am his. When I rise in the morning I wake up as his, when I sit down to a meal I eat as his, and drink as his. I eat, and drink, and sleep unto the Lord, in everything giving thanks unto him. It is blessed even to sleep as the Lord's beloved, to dream as his Abrahams and Jacobs do, to awake at night and sing like David, and then drop off to "sleep in Jesus." "It is a high condition," say you. I grant it, but it is where we ought to abide. The whole of our time and energy should be consecrated by this great master principle, "*I am his.*" Can you say it? Never rest till you can. And if you can, beloved, it involves great privilege. "I am his," then am I honored by having such an owner. If a horse or a sheep is said to belong to the Queen, everybody thinks much of it: now you are not the Queen's, but you are the Lord's, and that is far more. Through belonging to Christ you are safe, for he will surely keep his own. He will not lose his own sheep, he paid too dear a price for them to lose them. Against all the powers of earth and hell the Redeemer will hold his own and keep them to the end. If you are his he will provide for you. A good husband careth for his spouse, and even thus the Lord Jesus Christ cares for those who are betrothed unto him. You will be perfected too, for whatever Christ has he will make worthy of himself and bring it to glory. It is because we are his that we shall get to heaven, for he has said, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." Because they are his he would have them with him.

Now, give your thoughts licence to wonder that any one of us should be able to say, "I am his." "I who used to be so giddy and thought" less, So sceptical, and perhaps profane, I am his." Ay, and some of you can say, "I who used to be passionate and proud, I who was a drunkard, I whose lips were black with blasphemy, I am his." Glory be unto thee, O Jesus Christ, for this, that thou hast taken up such worthless things as we are and made us thine. No longer do we belong to this present evil world, we live for the world to come. We do not even belong to the church, so as to make it our master; we are part of the flock, but like all the rest we belong to the Great Shepherd. We will not give ourselves up to any party, or become the slave of any denomination, for we belong to Christ. We do not belong to sin, or self, or Satan; we belong entirely, exclusively, and irrevocably to the Lord Jesus Christ. Another master waits upon us and asks us to give our energies to his

services, but our answer is, "I am already engaged." "How is that?" "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus, and therefore from henceforth trouble me no more." "But can you not serve me in part?" "No, sir, I cannot serve two masters; I am not like a man who can do as he pleases, I have no time to call my own." "How is that?" "I belong to Christ, I am wholly his. If there is anything to be done for him I am his man to the best of my ability; I decline no service to which he calls me, but I can serve no other Lord." Lord Jesus, help each one of us now to say—

"I am thine, and thine alone,
This I gladly, fully own;
And in all my works and ways,
Only now would seek thy praise."

III. To conclude: the saint feels DELIGHT IN THE VERY THOUGHT OF CHRIST. "*He feedeth among the lilies.*" When we love any persons, and we are away from home, we delight to think of them, and to remember what they are doing. You are a husband travailing in a foreign land; this morning you said to yourself, "At this time they are just getting up at home." Perhaps the time is different, for you are in another longitude, and you say to yourself, "Ah, now the dear children are just getting ready to go to the Sabbath-school;" and by-and-by you think they are at dinner. So delight in the thought of Christ made the church say, "He feedeth among the lilies." She was pleased to think of where he was and what he was doing.

Now, *where is Jesus?* What are these lilies? Do not these lilies represent the pure in heart, with whom Jesus dwells? The spouse used the imagery which her Lord had put into her mouth. He said "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters," and she appropriates the symbol to all the saints. A preacher who is great at spiritualizing has well said on this verse, "The straight stalk, standing up erect from the earth, its flowers as high from the ground as possible, do they not tell us of heavenly-mindedness? Do they not seem to say, 'set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth'? And if the spotless snow of the leaves teaches us of grace, then the gold of the anthers tells us of that crown which shall be the reward of grace." The violet and the primrose in spring nestle close to the earth, as if in sympathy with her chill condition, but the lily lifts up itself towards heaven in sympathy with the summer's light and splendor. The lily is frail, and such are the saints of God; were not Jesus among them to protect them the wild beast would soon tread them down. Frail as they are, they are surpassingly lovely, and their beauty is not that which is made with hands. It is a beauty put upon them by the Lord, for "they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The saints work not for life, and spin no righteousness of their own, and yet the royal righteousness which adorns them far surpasses all that wisdom could devise or wealth procure.

Where, then, is my Lord to-day? He is up and away, among the lilies of Paradise. In imagination I see those stately rows of milkwhite lilies growing no longer among thorns: lilies which are never soiled with the dust of earth, which for ever glisten with the eternal dews of fellowship, while their roots drink in unfading life from the river of the water of life which waters the garden of the Lord. There is Jesus! Can you see him? He is fairer even than the lilies which bow their heads around him. But he is here too where we are, like lilies which have scarce opened yet, lily buds as yet, but still watered by the same river, and yielding in our measure the same perfume. O ye lilies of Christ's own planting, he is among you; Jesus is in this house to-day, the unction which has made his garments so fragrant is discerned among us.

But *what is he doing* among the lilies? It is said, "He feedeth among the lilies." He is feeding himself, not *on* the lilies, but *among* them. Our Lord finds solace among his people. His delights are with the sons of men; he joys to see the graces of his people, to receive their love, and to discern his own image in their faces. As he said to the woman of Samaria, "Give me to drink," so does he say to each one of his people, "Give me to drink," and he is refreshed by their loving fellowship. But the text means that he is feeding his people. He feedeth that part of his flock redeemed by blood of which we read that "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them into living fountains of waters." Nor does he forget that part of his flock which is in the low lands of earth, but he gives them also their portion of food. He has fed us this morning, for he is the good Shepherd, and leaves none of his sheep to famish.

Then *what shall I do?* Well, I will abide among the lilies. His saints shall be my companions. Where they flourish I will try to grow. I will be often in their assemblies. Ay, and I will be a lily too. By faith I will neither toil nor spin in a legal fashion, but I will live by faith upon the Son of God, rooted in him. I would be pure in life, and I would have the golden anther of looking to the recompense of the reward. I would lift up my soul aloft" towards heaven as the lily lifts up its flower. Jesus will come and feed by my side if I am a lily, and even I may yield him some pleasure by my humble gratitude.

Beloved, this is a choice subject, but it is more sweet as a matter of fact than mere hearing can make it. "He feedeth among the lilies." This is our joy, that Christ is in his church, and the pith of all I want to say is this; never think of yourself or of the church apart from Jesus. The spouse says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his", she weaves the two into one. The cause of the church is the cause of Christ; the work of God will never be accomplished by the church apart from Christ, her power lies in his being in her midst. He feedeth among the lilies, and therefore those lilies shall never be destroyed, but their sweetness shall make fragrant all the earth. The church of Christ, working with her Lord, must conquer, but never if she tries to stand alone or to compass any end apart from him.

As for each one of us personally, let us not think of ourselves apart from Christ, nor of Christ apart from us. Let George Herbert's prayer be ours.

"Oh, be mine still, still make me thine,
Or rather make nor mine nor thine."

Let *mine* melt into *thine*. Oh, to have joint stock with Christ, and to trade under one name; to be married to Christ and lose our old name, and wast his name, and say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." As the wife is lost in the husband, and the stone in the building, and the branch in the vine, and the member in the head, we would be so amalgamated with Christ, and have such fellowship with him that there shall be no more mine nor thine.

Last of all, poor sinner, you will say, "There is nothing in all this for me," and I should not like to send you away without a word. You are saying "This is a day of good tidings, but it is only for God's own people." I beg you to read through the first and second chapters of the Song, and see who it was that said, "My beloved is mine," because I should not wonder but what you are very like her. She was one who confessed, "I am black", and so are you. Perhaps grace will, one of these days, help you to say, "I am comely." She was one with whom her mother's children were angry—perhaps you, too, are a speckled bird. She had done servile work, for they made her a keeper of the vineyards. I should not wonder but what you are doing servile work, too, trying to save yourself instead of accepting the salvation which Jesus has already wrought out for sinners. So it

came to pass that she became very sorrowful and passed through a winter of rain and cold. Perhaps you are there; and yet you know she came out of it her winter was past, and the birds began to sing. She had been hidden in the secret places of the stairs, as you are now; but she was called out from the dust and cobwebs to see the face of her Lord.

One thing I wish to whisper in your ears—she was in the clefts of the rock. O soul, if thou canst but get there, if thou canst shelter in the riven side of our Beloved, that deep gash of the spear from which flowed blood and water, “to be of sin the double cure”; if thou canst get there, I say, though thou be black and grimed with sin, and an accursed sinner, only fit to be a firebrand in hell, yet shalt thou, even thou, be able to sing with all the rapture of the liveliest saint on earth, and one day with all the transport of the brightest ones above, “My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.” There, go your way with those silver bells ringing in your ears; they ring a marriage peal to saints, but they ring also a cheery invitation to sinners, and this is the tune they are set to—Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Sinner, come! God bless you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Song of Solomon 2.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—660, 663, 614.

“The Turning Point.”

For Whom Did Christ Die?

A Sermon

(No. 1191)

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, September 6th, 1874, by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Christ died for the ungodly.”—Romans 5:6.

In this verse the human race is described as a sick man, whose disease is so far advanced that he is altogether without strength: no power remains in his system to throw off his mortal malady, nor does he desire to do so; he could not save himself from his disease if he would, and would not if he could. I have no doubt that the apostle had in his eye the description of the helpless infant given by the prophet Ezekiel; it was an infant—an infant newly born—an infant deserted by its mother before the necessary offices of tenderness had been performed; left unwashed, unclothed, unfed, a prey to certain death under the most painful circumstances, forlorn, abandoned, hopeless. Our race is like the nation of Israel, its whole head is sick, and its whole heart faint. Such, unconverted men, are you! Only there is this darker shade in your picture, that your condition is not only your calamity, but your fault. In other diseases men are grieved at their sickness, but this is the worst feature in your case, that you love the evil which is destroying you. In addition to the pity which your case demands, no little blame must be measured out to you: you are without will for that which is good, your “cannot” means “will not,” your inability is not physical but moral, not that of the blind who cannot see for want of eyes, but of the willingly ignorant who refuse to look.

While man is in this condition Jesus interposes for his salvation. “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”; “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” according to “his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.” The pith of my sermon will be an endeavour to declare that the reason of Christ's dying for us did not lie in our excellence; but where sin abounded grace did much more abound, for the persons for whom Jesus died were viewed by him as the reverse of good, and he came into the world to save those who are guilty before God, or, in the words of our text, “Christ died for the ungodly.”

Now to our business. We shall dwell first upon *the fact*—“Christ died for the ungodly”; then we shall consider the *fair inferences* therefrom; and, thirdly, proceed to think and speak of the proclamation of this simple but wondrous truth.

First, here is THE FACT—“*Christ died for the ungodly.*” Never did the human ear listen to a more astounding and yet cheering truth. Angels desire to look into it, and if men were wise they would ponder it night and day. Jesus, the Son of God, himself God over all, the infinitely glorious One, Creator of heaven and earth, out of love to me stooped to become a man and die. Christ, the thrice holy God, the pure-hearted man, in whom there was no sin and could be none, espoused the cause of the wicked. Jesus, whose doctrine makes deadly war on sin, whose Spirit is the destroyer of evil, whose whole self abhors iniquity, whose second advent will prove his indignation against transgression, yet undertook the cause of the impious, and even unto death pursued their salvation.

The Christ of God, though he had no part or lot in the fall and the sin which has arisen out of it, has died to redeem us from its penalty, and, like the psalmist, he can cry, "Then I restored that which I took not away." Let all holy beings judge whether this is not the miracle of miracles!

Christ, the name given to our Lord, is an expressive word; it means "Anointed One," and indicates that he was sent upon a divine errand, commissioned by supreme authority. The Lord Jehovah said of old, "*I have laid* help upon one that is mighty, *I have exalted* one chosen out of the people"; and again, "*I have given him* as a covenant to the people, a leader and commander to the people." Jesus was both set apart to this work, and qualified for it by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. He is no unauthorised saviour, no amateur deliverer, but an ambassador clothed with unbounded power from the great King, a Redeemer with full credentials from the Father. It is this ordained and appointed Saviour who has "died for the ungodly." Remember this, ye ungodly! Consider well who it was that came to lay down his life for such as you are.

The text says Christ *died*. He did a great deal besides dying, but the crowning act of his career of love for the ungodly, and that which rendered all the rest available to them, was his death for them. He actually gave up the ghost, not in fiction, but in fact. He laid down his life for us, breathing out his soul, even as other men do when they expire. That it might be indisputably clear that he was really dead, his heart was pierced with the soldier's spear, and forthwith came there out blood and water. The Roman governor would not have allowed the body to be removed from the cross had he not been duly certified that Jesus was indeed dead. His relatives and friends who wrapped him in linen and laid him in Joseph's tomb, were sorrowfully sure that all that lay before them was a corpse. The Christ really died, and in saying that, we mean that he suffered all the pangs incident to death; only he endured much more and worse, for his was a death of peculiar pain and shame, and was not only attended by the forsaking of man, but by the departure of his God. That cry, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" was the innermost blackness of the thick darkness of death.

Our Lord's death was penal, inflicted upon him by divine justice; and rightly so, for on him lay our iniquities, and therefore on him must lay the suffering. "It pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." He died under circumstances which made his death most terrible. Condemned to a felon's gibbet, he was crucified amid a mob of jesters, with few sympathising eyes to gaze upon him; he bore the gaze of malice and the glance of scorn; he was hooted and jeered by a ribald throng, who were cruelly inventive in their taunts and blasphemies. There he hung, bleeding from many wounds, exposed to the sun, burning with fever, and devoured with thirst, under every circumstance of contumely, pain, and utter wretchedness; his death was of all deaths the most deadly death, and emphatically "Christ died."

But the pith of the text comes here, that "Christ died *for the ungodly*"; not for the righteous, not for the reverent and devout, but for the *ungodly*. Look at the original word, and you will find that it has the meaning of "impious, irreligious, and wicked." Our translation is by no means too strong, but scarcely expressive enough. To be ungodly, or godless, is to be in a dreadful state, but as use has softened the expression, perhaps you will see the sense more clearly if I read it, "Christ died for the *impious*," for those who have no reverence for God. Christ died for the godless, who, having cast off God, cast off with him all love for that which is right. I do not know a word that could more fitly describe the most irreligious of mankind than the original word in this place, and I believe it is used on purpose by the Spirit of God to convey to us the truth, which we are always

slow to receive, that Christ did not die because men were good, or would be good, but died for them as ungodly—or, in other words, “he came to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Observe, then, that when the Son of God determined to die for men, he viewed them as ungodly, and far from God by wicked works. In casting his eye over our race he did not say, “Here and there I see spirits of nobler mould, pure, truthful, truth-seeking, brave, disinterested, and just; and therefore, because of these choice ones, I will die for this fallen race.” No; but looking on them all, he whose judgment is infallible returned this verdict, “They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Putting them down at that estimate, and nothing better, Christ died for them. He did not please himself with some rosy dream of a superior race yet to come, when the age of iron should give place to the age of gold,—some halcyon period of human development, in which civilisation would banish crime, and wisdom would conduct man back to God. Full well he knew that, left to itself, the world would grow worse and worse, and that by its very wisdom it would darken its own eyes. It was not because a golden age would come by natural progress, but just because such a thing was impossible, unless he died to procure it, that Jesus died for a race which, apart from him, could only develop into deeper damnation. Jesus viewed us as we really were, not as our pride fancies us to be; he saw us to be without God, enemies of our own Creator, dead in trespasses and sins, corrupt, and set on mischief, and even in our occasional cry for good, searching for it with blinded judgment and prejudiced heart, so that we put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. He saw that in us was no good thing, but every possible evil, so that we were lost,—utterly, helplessly, hopelessly lost apart from him: yet viewing us as in that graceless and Godless plight and condition, he died for us.

I would have you remember that the view under which Jesus beheld us was not only the true one, but, for us, the kindly one; because had it been written that Christ died for the better sort, then each troubled spirit would have inferred “he died not for me.” Had the merit of his death been the perquisite of honesty, where would have been the dying thief? If of chastity, where the woman that loved much? If of courageous fidelity, how would it have fared with the apostles, for they all forsook him and fled? There are times when the bravest man trembles lest he should be found a coward, the most disinterested frets about the selfishness of his heart, and the most pure is staggered by his own impurity; where, then, would have been hope for one of us, if the gospel had been only another form of law, and the benefits of the cross had been reserved as the rewards of virtue? The gospel does not come to us as a premium for virtue, but it presents us with forgiveness for sin. It is not a reward for health, but a medicine for sickness. Therefore, to meet all cases, it puts us down at our worst, and, like the good Samaritan with the wounded traveller, it comes to us where we are. “Christ died for the impious” is a great net which takes in even the leviathan sinner; and of all the creeping sinners innumerable which swarm the sea of sin, there is not one kind which this great net does not encompass.

Let us note well that in this condition lay the need of our race that Christ should die. I do not see how it could have been written “Christ died for the *good*.” To what end for the good? Why need they his death? If men are perfect, does God need to be reconciled to them? Was he ever opposed to holy beings? Impossible! On the other hand, were the good ever the enemies of God? If such there be are they not of necessity his friends? If man be by nature just with God, to what end should the Saviour die? “*The just for the unjust*” I can understand; but the “just dying for the just” were a double injustice—an injustice that the just should be punished at all, and another injustice that the just should be punished for them. Oh no! If Christ died, it must be because there

was a penalty to be paid for sin committed, hence he must have died for those who had committed the sin. If Christ died, it must have been because “a fountain filled with blood” was necessary for the cleansing away of heinous stains; hence, it must have been for those who are defiled. Suppose there should be found anywhere in this world an unfallen man—perfectly innocent of all actual sin, and free from any tendency to it, there would be a superfluity of cruelty in the crucifixion of the innocent Christ for such an individual. What need has he that Christ should die for him, when he has in his own innocence the right to live? If there be found beneath the copes of heaven an individual who, notwithstanding some former slips and flaws, can yet, by future diligence, completely justify himself before God, then it is clear that there is no need for Christ to die for him. I would not insult him by telling him that Christ died for him, for he would reply to me, “Why should he? Cannot I make myself just without him?” In the very nature of things it must be so, that if Christ Jesus dies he must die for the ungodly. Such agonies as his would not have been endured had there not been a cause, and what cause could there have been but sin?

Some have said that Jesus died as our example; but that is not altogether true. Christ’s death is not absolutely an example for men, it was a march into a region of which he said, “Ye cannot follow me now.” His life was our example, but not his death in all respects, for we are by no means bound to surrender ourselves voluntarily to our enemies as he did, but when persecuted in one city we are bidden to flee to another. To be willing to die for the truth is a most Christly thing, and in that Jesus is our example; but into the winepress which he trod it is not ours to enter, the voluntary element which was peculiar to his death renders it inimitable. He said, “I lay down my life of myself; no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.” One word of his would have delivered him from his foes; he had but to say “Begone!” and the Roman guards must have fled like chaff before the wind. He died because he willed to do so; of his own accord he yielded up his spirit to the Father. It must have been as an atonement for the guilty; it could not have been as an example, for no man is bound voluntarily to die. Both the dictates of nature, and the command of the law, require us to preserve our lives. “Thou shalt not kill” means “Thou shalt not voluntarily give up thine own life any more than take the life of another.” Jesus stood in a special position, and therefore he died; but his example would have been complete enough without his death, had it not been for the peculiar office which he had undertaken. We may fairly conclude that Christ died for men who needed such a death; and, as the good did not need it for an example—and in fact it is not an example to them—he must have died for the ungodly.

The sum of our text is this—all the benefits resulting from the Redeemer’s passion, and from all the works that followed upon it, are for those who by nature are ungodly. His gospel is that sinners believing in him are saved. His sacrifice has put away sin from all who trust him, and, therefore, it was offered for those who had sin upon them before. “He rose again for our justification,” but certainly not for the justification of those who can be justified by their own works. He ascended on high, and we are told that he “received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also.” He lives to intercede, and Isaiah tells us that “He made intercession for the transgressors.” The aim of his death, resurrection, ascension, and eternal life, is towards the sinful sons of men. His death has brought pardon, but it cannot be pardon for those who have no sin—pardon is only for the guilty. He is exalted on high “to give repentance,” but surely not to give repentance to those who have never sinned, and have nothing to repent of. Repentance and remission both imply previous guilt in those who receive them: unless, then, these gifts of the exalted Saviour are mere shams and superfluities, they must be meant for the really guilty. From his side there flowed out water as well as blood—the

water is intended to cleanse polluted nature, then certainly not the nature of the sinless, but the nature of the impure; and so both blood and water flowed for sinners who need the double purification. To-day the Holy Spirit regenerates men as the result of the Redeemer's death; and who can be regenerated but those who need a new heart and a right spirit? To regenerate the already pure and innocent were ridiculous; regeneration is a work which creates life where there was formerly death, gives a heart of flesh to those whose hearts were originally stone, and implants the love of holiness where sin once had sole dominion. Conversion is also another gift, which comes through his death, but does he turn those whose faces are already in the right direction? It cannot be. He converts the sinner from the error of his ways, he turns the disobedient into the right way, he leads back the stray sheep to the fold. Adoption is another gift which comes to us by the cross. Does the Lord adopt those who are already his sons by nature? If children already, what room is there for adoption? No; but the grand act of divine love is that which takes those who are "children of wrath even as others," and by sovereign grace puts them among the children, and makes them "heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ."

To-day I see the Good Shepherd in all the energy of his mighty love, going forth into the dreadful wilderness. For whom is he gone forth? For the ninety and nine who feed at home? No, but into the desert his love sends him, over hill and dale, to seek the one lost sheep which has gone astray. Behold, I see him arousing his church, like a good housewife, to cleanse her house. With the besom of the law she sweeps, and with the candle of the word she searches, and what for? For those bright new coined pieces fresh from the mint, which glitter safely in her purse? Assuredly not, but for that lost piece which has rolled away into the dust, and lies hidden in the dark corner. And lo! grandest of all visions! I see the Eternal Father, himself, in the infinity of his love, going forth in haste to meet a returning child. And whom does he go to meet? The elder brother returning from the field, bringing his sheaves with him? An Esau, who has brought him savoury meat such as his soul loveth? A Joseph whose godly life has made him lord over all Egypt? Nay, the Father leaves his home to meet a returning prodigal, who has companied with harlots, and grovelled among swine, who comes back to him in disgraceful rags, and disgusting filthiness! It is on a sinner's neck that the Father weeps; it is on a guilty cheek that he sets his kisses; it is for an unworthy one that the fatted calf is killed, and the best robe is worn, and the house is made merry with music and with dancing. Yes, tell it, and let it ring round earth and heaven, Christ died for the ungodly. Mercy seeks the guilty, grace has to do with the impious, the irreligious and the wicked. The physician has not come to heal the healthy, but to heal the sick. The great philanthropist has not come to bless the rich and the great, but the captive and the prisoner. He puts down the mighty from their seats, for he is a stern leveller, but he has come to lift the beggar from the dunghill, and to set him among princes, even the princes of his people. Sing ye, then, with the holy Virgin, and let your song be loud and sweet,—“He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away.” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” O ye guilty ones, believe in him and live.

II. Let us now consider THE PLAIN INFERENCES FROM THIS FACT. Let me have your hearts as well as your ears, especially those of you who are not yet saved, for I desire you to be blessed by the truths uttered; and oh, may the Spirit of God cause it to be so. It is clear that those of you who are ungodly—and if you are unconverted you are that—*are in great danger*. Jesus would not interpose his life and bear the bloody sweat and crown of thorns, and nails, and spear,

and scorn unmitigated, and death itself, if there were not solemn need and imminent peril. There is danger, solemn danger, for you. You are under the wrath of God already, and you will soon die, and then, as surely as you live, you will be lost, and lost forever; as certain as the righteous will enter into everlasting life, you will be driven into everlasting punishment. The cross is the danger signal to you, it warns you that if God spared not his only Son, he will not spare you. It is the lighthouse set on the rocks of sin to warn you that swift and sure destruction awaits you if you continue to rebel against the Lord. Hell is an awful place, or Jesus had not needed to suffer such infinite agonies to save us from it.

It is also fairly to be inferred that *out of this danger only Christ can deliver the ungodly, and he only through his death*. If a less price than that of the life of the Son of God could have redeemed men, he would have been spared. When a country is at war, and you see a mother give up her only boy to fight her country's battles—her only well-beloved, blameless son—you know that the battle must be raging very fiercely, and that the country is in stern danger: for, if she could find a substitute for him, though she gave all her wealth, she would lavish it freely to spare her darling. If she were certain that in his heart a bullet would find its target, she must have strong love for her country, and her country must be in dire necessity ere she would bid him go. If, then, "God spared not his Son, but freely delivered him up for us all," there must have been a dread necessity for it. It must have stood thus: die he, or the sinner must, or justice must; and since justice could not, and the Father desired that the sinner should not, then Christ *must*; and so he did. Oh, miracle of love! I tell you, sinners, you cannot help yourselves, nor can all the priests of Rome or Oxford help you, let them perform their antics as they may; Jesus alone can save, and that only by his death. There on the bloody tree hangs all man's hope; if you enter heaven it must be by force of the incarnate God's bleeding out his life for you. You are in such peril that only the pierced hand can lift you out of it. Look to him, at once, I pray you, ere the proud waters go over your soul.

Then let it be noticed—and this is the point I want constantly to keep before your view—that *Jesus died out of pure pity*. He must have died out of the most gratuitous benevolence to the undeserving, because the character of those for whom he died could not have attracted him, but must have been repulsive to his holy soul. The impious, the godless—can Christ love these for their character? No, he loved them notwithstanding their offences, loved them as creatures fallen and miserable, loved them according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses and tender mercies, from pity, and not from admiration. Viewing them as ungodly, yet he loved them. This is extraordinary love! I do not wonder that some persons are loved by others, for they wear a potent charm in their countenances, their ways are winsome, and their characters charm you into affection; "but God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." He looked at us, and there was not a solitary beauty spot upon us: we were covered with "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores," distortions, defilements, and pollutions; and yet, for all that, Jesus loved us. He loved us because he would love us; because his heart was full of pity, and he could not let us perish. Pity moved him to seek the most needy objects that his love might display its utmost ability in lifting men from the lowest degradation, and putting them in the highest position of holiness and honour.

Observe another inference. If Christ died for the ungodly, *this fact leaves the ungodly no excuse if they do not come to him*, and believe in him unto salvation. Had it been otherwise they might have pleaded, "We are not fit to come." But you are ungodly, and Christ died for the ungodly, why not for you? I hear the reply, "But I have been so very vile." Yes, you have been impious, but your

sin is not worse than this word ungodly will compass. Christ died for those who were wicked, thoroughly wicked. The Greek word is so expressive that it must take in your case, however wrongly you have acted. "But I cannot believe that Christ died for such as I am," says one. Then, sir, mark! I hold you to your words, and charge you with contradicting the Eternal God to his teeth, and making him a liar. Your statement gives God the lie. The Lord declares that "Christ died for the ungodly," and you say he did not, what is that but to make God a liar? How can you expect mercy if you persist in such proud unbelief? Believe the divine revelation. Close in at once with the gospel. Forsake your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall surely live. The fact that Christ died for the ungodly renders self-righteousness a folly. Why need a man pretend that he is good if "Christ died for the ungodly?" We have an orphanage, and the qualification for our orphanage is that the child for whom admission is sought shall be utterly destitute. I will suppose a widow trying to show to me and my fellow trustees that her boy is a fitting object for the charity; will she tell us that her child has a rich uncle? Will she enlarge upon her own capacities for earning a living? Why, this would be to argue against herself, and she is much too wise for that, I warrant you, for she knows that any such statements would damage rather than serve her cause. So, sinner, do not pretend to be righteous, do not dream that you are better than others, for that is to argue against yourself. Prove that you are not by nature ungodly, and you prove yourself to be one for whom Jesus did not die. Jesus comes to make the ungodly godly, and the sinful holy, but the raw material upon which he works is described in the text not by its goodness but by its badness; it is for the ungodly that Jesus died. "Oh, but if I felt!" Felt what? Felt something which would make you better? Then you would not so clearly come under the description here given. If you are destitute of good feelings, and thoughts, and hopes, and emotions, you are ungodly, and "Christ died for the ungodly." Believe in him and you shall be saved from that ungodliness.

"Well," cries out some Pharisaic moralist, "this is dangerous doctrine." How so? Would it be dangerous doctrine to say that physicians exercise their skill to cure sick people and not healthy ones? Would that encourage sickness? Would that discourage health? You know better; you know that to inform the sick of a physician who can heal them is one of the best means for promoting their cure. If ungodly and impious men would take heart and run to the Saviour, and by him become cured of impiety and ungodliness, would not that be a good thing? Jesus has come to make the ungodly godly, the impious pious, the wicked obedient, and the dishonest upright. He has not come to save them *in* their sins, but *from* their sins; and this is the best of news for those who are diseased with sin. Self-righteousness is a folly, and despair is a crime, since Christ died for the ungodly. None are excluded hence but those who do themselves exclude; this great gate is set so wide open that the very worst of men may enter, and you, dear hearer, may enter now.

I think it is also very evident from our text that when they are saved, *the converted find no ground of boasting*; for when their hearts are renewed and made to love God they cannot say, "See how good I am," because they were not so by nature; they were ungodly, and, as such, Christ died for them. Whatever goodness there may be in them after conversion they ascribe it to the grace of God, since by nature they were alienated from God, and far removed from righteousness. If the truth of natural depravity be but known and felt, free grace must be believed in, and then all glorying is at an end.

This will also keep the saved ones from thinking lightly of sin. If God had forgiven sinners without an atonement they might have thought little of transgression, but now that pardon comes to them through the bitter griefs of their Redeemer they cannot but see it to be an exceeding great

evil. When we look to Jesus dying on the cross we end our dalliance with sin, and utterly abhor the cause of so great suffering to so dear a Saviour. Every wound of Jesus is an argument against sin. We never know the full evil of our iniquities till we see what it cost the Redeemer to put them away.

Salvation by the death of Christ is the strongest conceivable promoter of all the things which are pure, honest, lovely, and of good report. It makes sin so loathsome that the saved one cannot take up even its name without dread. "I will take away the name of Baalim out of thy mouth." He looks upon it as we should regard a knife rusted with gore, wherewith some villain had killed our mother, our wife, or child. Could we play with it? Could we bear it about our persons or endure it in our sight? No, accursed thing! stained with the heart's blood of my beloved, I would fain fling thee into the bottomless abyss! Sin is that dagger which stabbed the Saviour's heart, and henceforth it must be the abomination of every man who has been redeemed by the atoning sacrifice.

To close this point. Christ's death for the ungodly is *the grandest argument to make the ungodly love him when they are saved*. To love Christ is the mainspring of obedience in men—how shall men be led to love him? If you would grow love, you must sow love. Go, then; and let men know the love of Christ to sinners, and they will, by grace, be moved to love him in return. No doubt all of us require to know the threatenings of the wrath of God; but that which soonest touches my heart is Christ's free love to an unworthy one like myself. When my sins seem blackest to me, and yet I know that through Christ's death I am forgiven, this blest assurance melts me down.

"If thou hadst bid thy thunders roll,
And lightnings flash, to blast my soul.
I still had stubborn been;
But mercy has my heart subdued,
A bleeding Saviour I have view'd,
And now I hate my sin."

I have heard of a soldier who had been put in prison for drunkenness and insubordination several times and he had been also flogged, but nothing improved him. At last he was taken in the commission of another offence, and brought before the commanding officer, who said to him, "My man, I have tried everything in the martial code with you, except shooting you; you have been imprisoned and whipped, but nothing has changed you. I am determined to try something else with you. You have caused us a great deal of trouble and anxiety, and you seem resolved to do so still; I shall, therefore, change my plans with you, and I shall neither fine you, flog you, nor imprison you; I will see what kindness will do, and therefore I fully and freely forgive you." The man burst into tears, for he reckoned on a round number of lashes, and had steeled himself to bear them, but when he found he was to be forgiven, and set free, he said, "Sir, you shall not have to find fault with me again." Mercy won his heart. Now, sinner, in that fashion God is dealing with you. Great sinners! Ungodly sinners! God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways. I have threatened you, and you hardened your hearts against me. Therefore, come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Well," says one, "I am afraid if you talk to sinners so they will go and sin more and more." Yes, there are brutes everywhere, who can be so unnatural as to sin because grace abounds, but I bless God there is such a thing as the influence of love, and I am rejoiced that many feel the force of it, and yield to the conquering arms of amazing grace. The Spirit of God wins the day by such arguments as these; love is the great battering-ram which opens

gates of brass. When the Lord says, "I have blotted out thy transgressions like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities," then the man is moved to repentance.

I can tell you hundreds and thousands of cases in which this infinite love has done all the good that morality itself could ask to have done; it has changed the heart and turned the entire current of the man's nature from sin to righteousness. The sinner has believed, repented, turned from his evil ways, and become zealous for holiness. Looking to Jesus he has felt his sin forgiven, and he has started up a new man, to lead a new life. God grant it may be so this morning, and he shall have all the glory of it.

III. So now we must close—and this is the last point—THE PROCLAMATION OF THIS FACT, that "Christ died for the ungodly." I would not mind if I were condemned to live fifty years more, and never to be allowed to speak but these five words, if I might be allowed to utter them in the ear of every man, and woman, and child who lives. "CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY" is the best message that even angels could bring to men. In the proclamation of this the whole church ought to take its share. Those of us who can address thousands should be diligent to cry aloud—"Christ died for the ungodly"; but those of you who can speak to one, or write a letter to one, must keep on at this—"Christ died for the ungodly." Shout it out, or whisper it out; print it in capitals, or write it in a lady's hand—"Christ died for the ungodly." Speak it solemnly, it is not a thing for jest. Speak it joyfully; it is not a theme for sorrow, but for joy. Speak it firmly; it is indisputable fact. Facts of science, as they call them, are always questioned: this is unquestionable. Speak it earnestly; for if there be any truth which ought to arouse all a man's soul it is this: "Christ died for the ungodly." Speak it where the ungodly live, and that is at your own house. Speak it also down in the dark corners of the city, in the haunts of debauchery, in the home of the thief, in the den to the depraved. Tell it in the gaol; and sit down at the dying bed and read in a tender whisper—"Christ died for the ungodly." When you pass the harlot in the street, do not give a toss with that proud head of yours, but remember that "Christ died for the ungodly"; and when you recollect those that injured you, say no bitter word, but hold your tongue, and remember "Christ died for the ungodly." Make this henceforth the message of your life—"Christ died for the ungodly."

And, oh, dear friends, you that are not saved, take care that you receive this message. Believe it. Go to God with this on your tongue—"Lord save me, for Christ died for the ungodly, and I am of them." Fling yourself right on to this as a man commits himself to his lifebelt amid the surging billows. "But I do not feel," says one. Trust not your feelings if you do; but with no feelings and no hopes of your own, cling desperately to this, "Christ died for the ungodly." The transforming, elevating, spiritualising, moralising, sanctifying power of this great fact you shall soon know and be no more ungodly; but first, as ungodly, rest you on this, "Christ died for the ungodly." Accept this truth, my dear hearer, and you are saved. I do not mean merely that you will be pardoned, I do not mean that you will enter heaven, I mean much more; I mean that you will have a new heart; you will be saved from the love of sin, saved from drunkenness, saved from uncleanness, saved from blasphemy, saved from dishonesty. "Christ died for the ungodly"—if that be really known and trusted in, it will open in your soul new springs of living water which will cleanse the Augean stable of your nature, and make a temple of God of that which was before a den of thieves. Trust in the mercy of God through the death of Jesus Christ, and a new era in your life's history will at once commence.

Having put this as plainly as I know how, and having guarded my speech to prevent there being anything like a flowery sentence in it, having tried to put this as clearly as daylight itself,—that

“Christ died for the ungodly,” if your ears refuse the precious boons that come through the dying Christ, your blood be on your own heads, for there is no other way of salvation for any one among you. Whether you reject or accept this, I am clear. But oh! do not reject it, for it is your life. If the Son of God dies for sinners, and sinners reject his blood, they have committed the most heinous offence possible. I will not venture to affirm, but I do suggest that the devils in hell are not capable of so great a stretch of criminality as is involved in the rejection of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Here lies the highest love. The incarnate God bleeds to death to save men, and men hate God so much that they will not even have him as he dies to save them. They will not be reconciled to their Creator, though he stoops from his loftiness to the depths of woe in the person of his Son on their behalf. This is depravity indeed, and desperateness of rebellion. God grant you may not be guilty of it. There can be no fiercer flame of wrath than that which will break forth from love that has been trampled upon, when men have put from them eternal life, and done despite to the Lamb of God. “Oh,” says one, “would God I could believe!” “Sir, what difficulty is there in it? Is it hard to believe the truth? Darest thou belie thy God? Art thou steeling thy heart to such desperateness that thou wilt call thy God a liar?” “No; I believe Christ died for the ungodly,” says one, “but I want to know how to get the merit of that death applied to my own soul.” Thou mayest, then, for here it is—“He that believeth in him,” that is, he that trusts in him, “is not condemned.” Here is the gospel and the whole of it—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned.”

I am a poor weak man like yourselves, but my gospel is not weak; and it would be no stronger if one of “the mailed cherubim, or sworded seraphim” could take the platform and stand here instead of me. He could tell to you no better news. God, in condescension to your weakness, has chosen one of your fellow mortals to bear to you this message of infinite affection. Do not reject it! By your souls’ value, by their immortality, by the hope of heaven and by the dread of hell, lay hold upon eternal life; and by the fear that this may be your last day on earth, yea, and this evening your last hour, I do beseech you now, “steal away to Jesus.” There is life in a look at the crucified one; there is life at this moment for you. Look to him now and live. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ezekiel 16:1-14; Romans 5:1-11.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—174, 502 (v. 4, 5, 6), 553.

Indexes

Index of Scripture References

1 Samuel

20:10

Song of Solomon

2:16

Jeremiah

7:12-15

Luke

7:50 8:48 15:20 17:19 18:42

John

5

Romans

5:1-11 5:6

Hebrews

13:20-21

1 John

5:8

Revelation

3:14-21 21:8

Index of Scripture Commentary

1 Samuel

20:10

Song of Solomon

2:16

Luke

7:50 15:20 18:42

Romans

5:6

Hebrews

13:20-21

1 John

5:8

Revelation

3:14-21